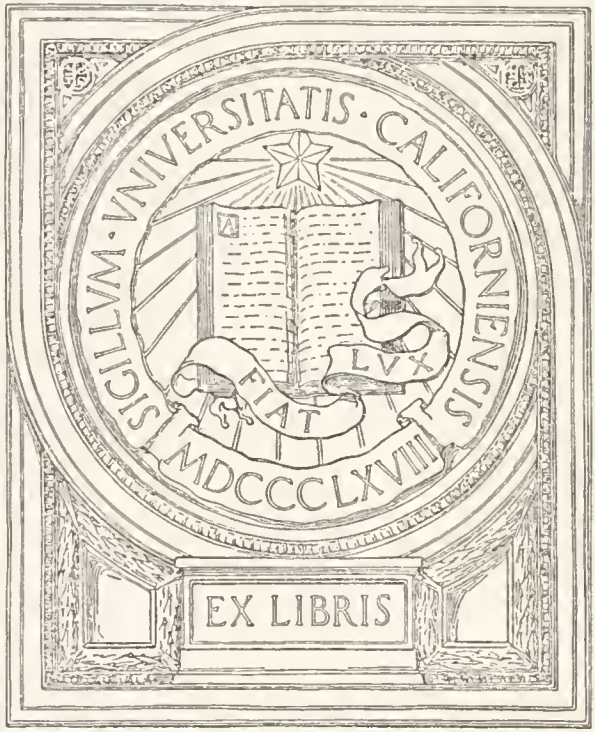
NELSON
EDINBURGH

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
AT LOS ANGELES



REFERENCE DEPARTMENT
NATIONAL UNION
10 AUG 191
POLITICAL LIBRARY

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2008 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

http://www.archive.org/details/awakeningofengla00gree

THE
AWAKENING OF ENGLAND

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

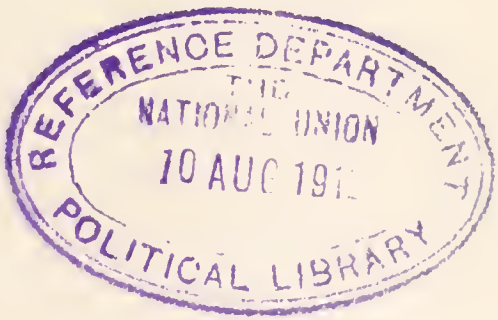
A FEW ACRES AND A COTTAGE.
3/6 net.

HOW I WORK MY SMALL FARM.
1/- net.

The Daily Market in the High Street, Evesham.

THE AWAKENING OF ENGLAND

F. E. GREEN



THOMAS NELSON AND SONS
LONDON, EDINBURGH, DUBLIN
NEW YORK, PARIS, LEIPZIG

"Let no one approach agricultural reform with a light heart, or crude theories. The labour will be Herculean. Land Reform, whether it takes the form of small ownership or small tenancy, only begins with them; they are only the root, the branches are infinite and far-spreading. This problem of ours is the most difficult, as it is the most vital, that we have tackled in one hundred years. It must not be approached with the idea of swift results, or of a golden age. It will not bring back hundreds of thousands to the land at once, and it is undesirable that it should do so. It will be a gradual process, and this is all the better. The task of organising, as well as creating a new rural population on a large scale might easily spell disaster; it would certainly breed vast difficulties. And the small man, labourer, artisan, or urban worker desiring to return to the soil, must not look for Arcadia. There are no eclogues to be written about the agriculture of to-day. The peasant owner must face hard work, a heavy struggle, much drudgery, some disappointment. His lot will not be easy; but it will be no harder than it is at present; and in this at least it will be better—that behind it will be hope, before it a future; that the man will be working for his own on his own; that he will be stimulated by the responsibilities of complete possession."—Sir Gilbert Parker, M.P., in *The English Review*, June 1911.

"We find the inhabitants of this earth divided into two great masses; the peasant paymasters—spade in hand, original imperial producers of turnips; and waiting on them all round, a crowd of polite persons modestly expectant of turnips, for some —too often theoretical—service."—John Ruskin.

HD
1925
G82

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

PAGE

In which the Author walks into the Heart of Rural England 1

CHAPTER II.

The Walk continued 26

CHAPTER III.

The Growth of a New England 43

CHAPTER IV.

"But for the land, we should have starved" . 72

CHAPTER V.

Colonising Crown Lands 82

CHAPTER VI.

The Farmer and Labourer as Rural Councillor . 99

HARVARD DEC 16 1940 LIBRARY SETS

CHAPTER VII.

PAGE

Moorland Holdings and the English Squire . 121

CHAPTER VIII.

Green Pastures and a Co-operative Depôt . . 136

CHAPTER IX.

The Islands of Intensive Culture . . . 154

CHAPTER X.

John Bull's Other Island 167

CHAPTER XI.

The Workshop plus the Land 209

CHAPTER XII.

The Urban Exodus 249

CHAPTER XIII.

Cottage Accommodation 265

CHAPTER XIV.

The Country House and the Independent Resident 289

CHAPTER XV.

PAGE
MANNERS IN ARCADY 301

CHAPTER XVI.

AFFORESTATION 315

CHAPTER XVII.

CAPITAL AND CO-OPERATION 334

CHAPTER XVIII.

FROM THE FARM TO THE MARKET-PLACE . . . 348

CHAPTER XIX.

THE OUTLOOK 362

ILLUSTRATIONS.

FACING PAGE

The Daily Market in the High Street, Evesham *Frontispiece*

Hurdle-making in a Hampshire Wood . . . 18

Middle Winterslow 20

Potato-lifting at Sutton Bridge, on Crown land small holdings, on co-partnership lines 84

A Typical 40-acre Stock Holding at Moulton, on Crown lands, managed by the Parish Council . 92

1. The Old Mud Cabin, replaced by the New Cottage 204

2. Typical Labourer's Cottage, with an acre of ground, let for one shilling a week (*Co. Limerick*) . . 204

1. A Farm-tied Cottage at Great Bradley, Suffolk . 274

2. Excellent Small Holders' Cottages . . . 274

A Sussex Labourer of the Old Order . . . 304

Bring me my bow of burning gold!
Bring me my arrows of desire!
Bring me my spear: O clouds, unfold!
Bring me my chariot of fire!

I will not cease from mental fight,
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,
Till we have built Jerusalem
In England's green and pleasant land.

WILLIAM BLAKE.

CHAPTER I.

IN WHICH THE AUTHOR WALKS INTO THE HEART OF RURAL ENGLAND.

NEARLY a hundred years ago a typical Englishman was continually taking long rides in rural England, recording what he saw and what he felt. He became the author of that remarkable work, *Rural Rides*, and was loved and feared throughout the length and breadth of our country. Some one has said of him that he had the eyes of a poet; but, unlike most poets, he knew the value of a sheep to a shilling. He rode about the countryside with an eye for agricultural beauty: that is, beauty expressed by fields of waving corn which arrest the eye like a cloth of gold; by cleanly hoed fields of cabbages with their great white hearts enclosed within their gorgeous green-blue leaves; but it was over a plant of swedes, or a flock of

southdowns folded in the valley for the night, that he would show the greatest enthusiasm.

Everywhere he looked for prosperity in our fertile land, and if he did not find it he asked the reason why. He not only asked the reason why, but also supplied the answers to his own questions. And he was not content with one answer. In terse, vigorous English prose, which has become a classic in our literature, he would drive his blows home, and he was not afraid to repeat them again and again.

Invariably well mounted, being a good judge of horseflesh, riding his forty miles a day, he was our typical John Bull in Revolt. Brought up on a farm, he knew what good tillage was, and if the farmer was not putting his hand to the plough as he should, he said so in trenchant language. If it was the fault of Westminster that things were bad in the country, he said so in still more vigorous prose, for members of Parliament and parsons always received the stoutest cudgelling from this literary rustic who became known throughout the Anglo-Saxon speaking world as William Cobbett.

In an emasculated age, when the law of

libel seems to be held like a threat over the head of every scribe, one dare not write nowadays as Cobbett wrote in 1826. Yet Cobbett himself was not exempt from persecution; for did he not endure two years in prison for courageously writing against an act of barbarous cruelty, in those good old days when sheep-stealing was a hanging matter, and snaring a rabbit a matter of transportation for life?

It would be interesting, I thought, to cover the same ground on foot in Hampshire and Wiltshire that Cobbett rode over on horseback in 1826, marking the change in the conditions of rural life between his day and ours.

The clamour on the subject of over-population was in full cry in Cobbett's time, that is, when the population of England and Wales was only 12,000,226. Now the population of England and Wales stands at 36,075,269, according to the census of 1911. Cobbett, however, contended that rural England was under-populated, and he rode forth as our St. George to slay the Dragon of false economic doctrines so hurtful to the well-being of our nation.

To see the country, as Cobbett sagely observed, and so to be free of the limitations of the highroad, one must either ride on horseback or walk. So with *Rücksack* on my back I began my walk amid the Hampshire Highlands; and in the autumn of 1910 found myself on the top of Inkpen Beacon, with my face set towards the valley which leads to Cobbett's favourite resting-place, Hurstbourne Tarrant.

On the wind-swept summit of Inkpen Beacon stands a gibbet. A gibbet has stood there, so the shepherds tell me, for over two hundred years, to mark the hanging of a husband and his mistress who had killed the wife by throwing her into a hornet's nest. Tragedy takes deeper root in the country than it does in the town. In the sunlit country purple shadows are visualised more intently than in the grey-toned city. To-day, the gibbet standing 1000 feet high, where the wind is ever moaning through its arms grimly extended against a cloud-racked sky, is a sinister symbol of the tragedy daily enacted in a land bereft of human life.

Here, in days gone by, beacon fires blazed in commemoration of Imperial triumphs.

Hither came shepherds and labourers, farmers and carters, woodmen and horsemen, to jubilate over England's greatness beyond the seas. But to-day, though it would not be difficult to find on the acres and acres given over to sport rubbish enough to burn, one would be hard put to it to get the men from the hill-side and valley to build the beacon. With its proximity to Portsmouth this highland countryside has, in days gone by, sent many a raw farmer's lad to the defence of old England by sea or land. To-day, though nearly every humble cottage has its cheap oleograph of a battle scene hung upon its walls, a khaki-clad lad is rarely seen stepping with pride the village street.

From this height the eye can traverse several counties—Wiltshire, Hampshire, Berkshire—and grimly envisage the one prevailing note: the absence of human life. Sheep bells, the gentle music of lonely places, tinkle in the distance, and as we descend the hill, passing at once into Hampshire, we meet a man in velveteens with a gun over his shoulder. He is the typical rustic here, and in his work lies no hope for the future. Whilst he remains in possession

the countryside will remain devoid of industrial life.

I had walked from Basingstoke to Kingsclere, nine miles along the turnpike road, and passed in all but seven cottages. From Kingsclere to Ecchinswell I passed only one cottage, and this was built in a disused chalk-pit; and but one person between Ecchinswell and Whitmay, and that a child, in a distance of four miles. The country from Basingstoke to this point, that is, Highclere Park, is largely in the hands of two noble lords. The hedges are rarely trimmed and many of the fields are gateless. I pitied the man who had to drive cattle to market along this turnpike road! Working alone in large fields, Hodge is an isolated unit living under the roof of a farm-tied cottage rented by his employer, the big farmer, who rules with an unchecked hand of iron the whole of this countryside.

When you reach Highclere you come into closer contact with the owners of the land and their retainers than in the hedgeless land through which we have just passed. Brand-new antique mansions are being built as residences for the new race of squirearchy. An iron gate of princely splendour flung

across the road challenges the way leading to the mansion. Gamekeepers in velveteens carrying stuffed birds in glass cases pass you along the road. Grooms and chauffeurs throw you a supercilious look as they note your dusty boots and trousers and the *Rücksack* on your back. Young women in cottages, who bear the unquestionable stamp of those who have served as ladies' maids, answer your questions with the meticulous languor of duchesses. Oppressive as all this is, there is yet an element of Comedy in it. There is, at any rate, the pageantry of Life. But here at Coombe, where I next halted, lying in the cup of the lonely hills at the foot of Inkpen Beacon, you meet Tragedy only, grim and unrelieved.

As you walk across a field where the withered unharvested grasses and the tall seed-bearing wild parsley and thistles are shoulder high, rabbits scurry away at almost every step you take, while pheasants and partridges fill the air with the whirr of wings. The first cottage you stumble across is literally falling down. The thatch has long disappeared, leaving the rafters and beams as bare as bones to the open skies. Then, as you enter the

village, you come to a row of four cottages under one roof. Only one of these is occupied; the other three, with their doors and windows battered in, have been left for rats to play havoc in and the wind to whistle through. From the occupied cottage issues a slatternly young wife with a sporting dog at her heels. It is probably the gamekeeper's.

They tell me here that when a cottage becomes unoccupied in the event of the death of the breadwinner, or when a family leaves to seek the higher wages and the larger freedom of the towns, that no attempt is ever made by the owner to keep the cottage in repair. Where pheasants are wanted, the peasant is not.

The more enlightened of the village schoolmasters rarely encourage any of the smarter boys to remain on the land; and who can blame them? Wages in this part of Hampshire and of Wiltshire adjoining are only 12s. a week for labourers, and 14s. for shepherds and stockmen. No promise of higher wages is made by the large farmers to induce the more efficient of the boys to remain at work on the farms. Cottage parents are often persuaded by the farmers to take away their

clever boys from school at the age of thirteen for the sake of the extra shilling or two added to the meagre family purse. This by law, unfortunately, they are allowed to do, if the boys are set to work on the farms. The smarter boys, however, soon quit rather than face the life of ill-paid drudgery that lies in front of them, leaving only the dolts behind. And so the land is deprived of brain-stuff, is starved of labour, and denuded of capital; and where it does not actually go back in fertility, it merely marks time. This is the natural sequence to our slipshod policy of *laissez-faire* applied to the land.

On one side of this valley, which runs from Inkpen Beacon to Hurstbourne Tarrant, are fields given over to the thistle, the wild carrot, and the burdock, forming one vast rabbit-warren. One could see that the plough had at one time been at work here. I saw fields like this near Whitmay, where I hid in the long grass with my camera in order to photograph the countryside around me running to waste, whilst a company of sportsmen passed by in the next field.

The irony of the waste fields of Coombe is brought home to us with a greater force when

we learn that it was on the slopes of Inkpen Beacon that Jethro Tull, the great agriculturist, used the first drill, and wrote the book which revolutionised English agricultural methods!

On the other side of the valley, instead of fields growing corn, as I have no doubt they did in Tull's day, we see acres and acres covered with young fir-trees as covert for game.

"This is to my taste," wrote Cobbett, "and here in the north of Hampshire it has its full gratification. I like to look at the winding side of the great Down with two or three numerous flocks of sheep on it, belonging to different farms; and to see lower down the folds in the fields ready to receive them for the night." I wonder what Cobbett would have said to the winding side of the great Down to-day, converted into a rabbit-warren and a pheasant preserve!

Though he always had an eye for beauty, it had, as I have said, to be the beauty of agricultural fecundity. He could see no beauty where poverty stalked the land. In 1822 wages at Hurstbourne Tarrant, at the other end of this valley, had dropped from 8s.

to 6s. a week. Here he saw some reapers in a field that were "very pretty girls, though as ragged as colts and as pale as ashes." As pale as ashes! No wonder; with bread at 1s. the gallon loaf and wages at 6s.!

Starvation may not be as apparent as of yore, it is true, but let us not plume ourselves with the white feather of Free Trade. Starvation has merely shifted its quarters. The countryside has been left empty of people, and starvation, attaching itself as a camp-follower to the rural exodus, has found its lair in the foul dens of the cities. An extra 4s. a week, with higher rents to absorb it, is nothing much to boast of, surely, after eighty years. Labourers with an increased standard of comfort, due largely to elementary education, are no more willing to bring up their families on 12s. a week than they were on 8s. The subjective poverty of the poor, it must be remembered, is more intense now than it was in Cobbett's time.

Yet the patience and endurance of the toil-smitten, underpaid English peasant is extraordinary. I stayed near Coombe with an elderly man who kept a small inn. He had been one of nine in a family supported by

a father whose wages were 8s. a week. Such was the dogged endurance of this father in the battle of life that he made it a rule to supplement his meagre wages by making one straw skep every evening after work, and it was part of the son's work as a lad to walk many miles to sell these skeps to beekeepers at 1s. each. In the winter months this "unskilled labourer" worked in the woods and made hurdles for sheep, and now, as an aged man, has become a small farmer.

Coombe lay under a cloud the day I visited it. I found sad-eyed children carrying flowers to the churchyard. A brave old Christian soldier had just been laid to rest in God's Acre, which he had guarded so long and so well. This was the vicar, aged eighty-three.

"Ah, I can remember the day," said my innkeeper friend to me—"it was about Joseph Arch's time—when my father was only getting 8s. a week. I mind very well the Sunday morning when the vicar gave out in his sermon, 'You farmers go to Newbury once a week and spend in that one day on your dinner and your drinks more than you give your carter for the whole week!' That evening the vicar was locked out of his own

church by his two churchwardens, who were our biggest farmers, and they never opened the church for three weeks after!" Those were the days, as Colonel Pedder says, "when the souls of squires and farmers rotted in the cradle of an easy conscience, and when the country parson was expected to think more of the hurdles than of the sheep."

It was Sunday afternoon when I left Coombe and took the rough valley road to Hurstbourne Tarrant. There is very little attempt at farming made along the whole length of this fertile valley, and during the six miles' walk I met not a soul save a John and a Mary, who, with arms still interlocked, seemed astonished to see me. I passed only one group of cottages, which formed the hamlet of Netherton. I noticed that these few cottages were numbered 146, 148, etc., in large metal letters, as though they belonged to some convict colony.

"Why," I asked a cottager, "are your cottages numbered, for there is no sign of a street?"

"That's Mr. ——'s notion," he answered, with a wry face.

The new landlord apparently could not be

bored with the pretty old-fashioned names of "Yew Cottage" or "Rose Cottage." No doubt, too, every employee would be duly numbered in the books of the estate.

Though this was the highroad from Hungerford to Andover, innumerable rabbits crossed and recrossed it in the broad daylight, and the feeling of isolation grew upon you until you began to wonder if you were really in overpopulated England. No hedges flank the road, nor ditches either, for on either side is a broad stretch of green grass divided by this white ribbon of a road, and beyond the grass, tier upon tier, rise oaks and beeches. It might have been a valley in some distant uninhabited country, and the tropical flaming patches of herb willow served but to heighten the illusion. I lay down upon the grass by the roadside to rest my back from the *Rücksack* and to drink in the beauty of the valley. Save for the flapping of the wings of the pigeons and the poignant cry of the plover, not a sound was to be heard. . . . When I rose, green sward and roadway were speckled with the white tufts of the bobbing tails of countless rabbits, and as I walked forward companies of them kept retreating like an

army at the sounding of the bugle. The sight was enough to stir the blood of the most indifferent of poachers!

Grass grew avidly in the middle of the road. It had time to grow, apparently, between the going of one cart and the coming of the next. Needless to say, no motors vexed this highway.

I was not surprised to find, when I reached Hurstbourne Tarrant, that all available accommodation had been taken up by the "shooters from London."

Hurstbourne Tarrant, it will be remembered, became the favourite resting-place of William Cobbett during his famous "Rural Rides." He preferred to call, indeed he insisted upon calling, the place by its old-fashioned name of Uphusband, and it was here that he wrote many of those articles in that virile English which have bequeathed to us so vivid a picture of the rural England of the first part of the nineteenth century.

The farmhouse of the Rookery where Cobbett always found a warm welcome from his farmer friend Blount, is passed as you cross the bridge to mount the steep hill on the way to Andover.

Blount was a Roman Catholic, and however much Cobbett may have attacked ministers of the Established Church (who, by the way, attacked him virulently the moment he came out of prison), he always had a good word to say for Roman Catholics. As you pass the Rookery you will notice a low wall with a flat, broad top to it, dividing the garden from the road. On this Blount used to place a plate of pork and bread for any Irish tramp who asked alms of him. No wonder this man attracted a character like Cobbett, for in the churchyard I found a great flat stone as big as a billiard-table laid over his grave. It was to be large enough, he gave instructions in his will, for the village boys to play marbles on; and he paid the old women of the village many sums of money to pick up baskets of flints to fill up a disused pit so that it could be converted into a playground for boys.

I noticed a crop growing at Rookery farm that would have astonished and delighted Cobbett and reminded him strongly of his visit to America. This was a crop of maize grown to give a wealth of green fodder to cows when the pastures are bare. If this crop were more generally grown in the south of

England, we should be able to keep a larger number of live stock on our farms.

Leaving Hurstbourne Tarrant for Andover, one passes through Doles Wood. Here I lingered awhile, for it was here that I was once again impressed with the resourcefulness, the thrift, the endurance of the English peasant, especially the peasant who is a craftsman of the woods. I heard the sound of a billhook at work in the woods, and this to me is always an alluring sound. I found the woodman, a man of from fifty to sixty years of age, making hurdles.

"Be you the gen'leman as come round with the squire t'other day?" he asked me.

"Who is the squire?" I asked.

"Mr. Dewar," he answered.

"Mr. George Dewar?" I asked with interest.

"He be the son of the squire," the woodman answered promptly. "He give me one of 'is books."

At last I had happened on an estate owned by one of the old race of squires. The woodman became communicative, and after inquiring with that courtesy so characteristic of the country poor, if I cared to listen to his "clatter," proceeded to talk to me of his life.

In the leisurely way of those who live in intimate contact with the oak, whose lives are never fretted by hurry, he told me how two years ago his wife had proposed that he should buy a cottage near by that was about to be sold. He scouted the proposition. Where was the money coming from? She then pointedly asked him how much he had. He declared his worldly wealth at £20, the accretion of little gifts and of "overplusses" from tree-felling and bark-stripping. Thereupon his wife exclaimed that they could do it. She herself owned to having £40, and the cottage could be had for £60. "I knew," remarked the woodman, "she 'ad put by summat, but I 'ad no idea how much. Then there was £4 for the writings," he added, thoroughly enjoying the situation of each saving in secret.

The secret teapot bank of the wife amazed the husband as much as it did the squire and myself. I asked him how it was done, for his earnings did not amount to more than 3s. a day at most. He informed me that his wife had saved most when their sons were lads, putting by the money paid in for their board and lodging.

Through Andover once more we come

Hurdle-making in a Hampshire wood. This woodman and his wife saved together £60, with which they bought an old cottage.

upon a stretch of billowy downs. Here, a sea of grass under wide skies lies open to the eyes. Each long throw of the Downs is crested by a sinuous wood, flung over the escarpment like a curl of sea-foam left high and dry and crystallised through the æons into a coil of massive foliage. This is a country apparently given over to the flock-master with the 1000-acre sheep-run. The Downs are bleak—so bleak that an old man described Over Wallop to me as a place where "you can *see* the wind." The subsoil of chalk lies under a few inches of poor soil. Surely, one would say, there could have been no change amid these immutable Downs since the days of Cobbett. And yet here amidst them, a new village has been recently created, simply by giving the labourer access to the land.

You will not see this change if you simply motor along the dusty highroad between Andover and Salisbury. You will have to turn off at Hazlitt's Hut, ascend the ridge, and dive down into Winterslow. One wonders whether Hazlitt ever met Cobbett riding over the Downs. That they did meet we know, for Hazlitt mentions that he found him "a very pleasant man, easy of access, affable, clear-

headed, gentle and mild in his manner, deliberate and unruffled in his speech, though some of his expressions were not very qualified."

Here, at Winterslow, in 1893, Major Poore bought a poor bleak hillside farm of 200 acres. He made the one and only bid for it at £7 : 10s. an acre. This was accepted, and Major Poore then formed what he called a Land Court (he is a great student of Anglo-Saxon customs), in which copyholds were knitted together by a thin thread of communal interest.

The land was then divided amongst the members of the Land Court, the smallest sum per acre paid being £8, for a sixteen-acre holding, the highest £30, for a single acre with a road frontage. The purchase money was repayable in fifteen years. Every one of the original purchasers has now cleared his debt to the Land Court, and out of the large surplus of £1400 acquired over the deal, every small holder has built a house with money borrowed at 3 per cent interest. Practically a new village has arisen at Middle Winterslow, created by these small holders.

It must not, however, be supposed for one instant that the men have acquired their land and built their houses entirely out of the profits

Middle Winterslow. Most of these houses have been erected by the small-holders cultivating the land seen on the upland divided up into strips.

of their holdings. Most of them are still woodmen spending the winter months at work in the woods, where each buys a few acres of underwood and cunningly makes of these as many hurdles, wattles, sheep-cribs, and bundles of faggots to sell as his skill can contrive. The holdings, though, give them work throughout the summer, work independent of employers, and a roof over their heads free of the whim of an employer-landlord; and on this rather poor and very exposed land I found one holder who gained his entire living from his eight acres. There is but little intensive culture practised, but the working result, as a whole, has been a success, not as measured by cash returns, but in the more intimate sense of achieving a greater measure of freedom. There is no other village community in either Hampshire or Wiltshire which lives so secure of a roof, and of a livelihood to be won, independent of the large farmer.

A good deal more might have been gained from the land, so it appeared to me, if the men had been equipped with more capital and practised co-operation. But in spite of their uneconomic individualism, I found some interesting examples of how men work the land on

this hillside. There was one man, as I have said, who gained his entire living from his eight acres, though at the same time it should be mentioned his wife took in washing. He was a good cultivator, and grew potatoes, sainfoin, rye, mangolds, and cabbages, and kept a pony and two cows, besides rearing calves. The largest small holder was he who cultivated sixteen acres, or rather, perhaps, who attempted to cultivate them, for one cannot expect an elderly gentleman of sixty-six years of age, who refuses to employ any labour save at harvest-time, to cultivate properly sixteen acres himself—though he has been for thirty years a teetotaller, a non-shaver, and a strict Baptist! He keeps six cows and three heifers, growing for them hay, sainfoin, oats, mangolds, and rye. He sells some of the milk and makes the rest into butter. He is an interesting man, for besides the qualities I have already enumerated he refuses to sell his milk according to any standard of measure. He lays down his own law, and by that you have to abide. The customer who should ask for half a pint of milk would go empty away, unless he chose to accept this small farmer's very liberal pennyworth.

Those who cultivated their land best were those who had an acre of garden and worked chiefly at other trades. The one-acre man, for instance, who paid perhaps £30 for his acre, and borrowed money to build his cottage, at 3 per cent from the surplus sum acquired by the Land Court, would buy about five acres of wood from the large woods near by, owned by Mr. Singer of sewing-machine fame. He would buy the right to cut this underwood at a public auction held in the early autumn; that is, he would buy a "lot" at about 50s. an acre and make of this hurdles, wattles, sheep-cribs, etc. Another man with seven and a half acres, in his way a small capitalist, possessing a waggon and a couple of horses, will act as carman to one or two of the woodmen, carrying as many as 10,000 faggots in a season, mostly to country bakers. Some of these men are very skilful woodmen, and their sheep-cribs, hurdles, and rakes find their way as far afield as Sussex and Essex.

The handicraft of the men in the woods is supplemented by the handicraft of the women at the spinning-wheel, for here wool, sheared from the sheep of the Downs, is spun by the cottage women, and weaved into beautiful cloth

on a large hand-loom. We can even imagine that some day, at Winterslow, the shepherds will be clothed in the wool sheared from the backs of the flocks that they own as well as tend.

As I found elsewhere, it is the village schoolmaster here who gives to the village community that mental stimulus which wins for it a self-reliance, which we so seldom find in those village communities living under the shadow of a great house with its attendant parasitic labour. Many of these craftsmen of the land are teetotallers, and at Winterslow, it seemed to me, the publicans were hard put to it for their living.

So happy has been this experiment of repeopling an empty hillside where a farm was going derelict, that a Conservative landowner, Mr. Clough, has, with admirable enterprise, bought an estate of 1000 acres in this neighbourhood, and already the green valley beyond West Winterslow is dotted with the red-brick houses of small holders.

These holdings are chiefly for men who want from eighty to ninety acres of land. Unlike the holdings of the Land Court, they are rented, the rent being £1 an acre, plus the equivalent to 5 per cent sunk on the

equipment of the holding. They are of too recent a creation to allow me to dwell on the economic results, except to say that they have had the healthy effect of raising the labourer's wages round about from 2s. to 2s. 6d. a day. It is the small holder, not the large farmer, who invariably pays the higher wage.

It was only here at Winterslow, along the whole range of the Hampshire and Wiltshire Downs, that I obtained any evidence of the rise of a new peasantry.

Over the high ridge one can take a field-path walk all the way across the Downs to Clarendon Park. At the foot of the hill, lying meekly at the gates of this princely park, is the decaying village of Pitton, which forms a woeful contrast to the prosperous, breezy, repeopled uplands of Winterslow. Here pheasants are at a premium, and men and women who wish to live by tilling the soil are held at a discount. To grow corn on the confines of these preserves must be uphill work, and the cottages and farm buildings lying in this sleepy hollow indicate the entire lack of agricultural enterprise. Here you tread on a pheasant at nearly every step you take.

CHAPTER II.

THE WALK CONTINUED.

In our search for any intensive cultivation in a countryside given over entirely to extensive cultivation and barren sport, we have wandered off the track of Cobbett when we enter Clarendon Park. So we will now retrace his bridle way along the fertile vale of the Avon and mark the difference there, where villages with roofs of thatch nestle close together amid the fat meadows watered by the silvery Avon.

To start where Cobbett started when he went out to slay "that monster Malthus," you must cut across that treeless, hedgeless range of "real Bown country," as he called it, which makes the finest coursing ground in all England, taking Ludgershall and Everley on your way, and make for the little hamlet of Wootton Rivers, where rises the Wiltshire

Avon. From this point we will follow its course to Salisbury, at any rate as far as Amesbury, avoiding the provincial Wen and the "Accursed Hill."

If you are from "the great Wen," and wish to follow Cobbett along the Avon, you would do well to get out at Savernake station. From there you can either follow the tow-path of the Kennet and Avon Canal—a straight, silver-green ribbon of water now rendered almost useless from a dog-in-the-manger policy of a great railway company—or you can pursue the longer and more beautiful way through the forest of Savernake.

Save in the interest of good forestry, one would have nothing touched in this noblest unspoilt forest in England. I entered it as the light of day was waning, and whilst watching a herd of deer breaking out from the rustling bracken, which here overtops the antlers of the stags, a man suddenly appeared before me. A stag which had glided almost imperceptibly into the aisle of the overarching beeches threw up its head, peered intently at the advancing figure, and then at a bound gave the signal for a general stampede of the whole herd down the shadow-encompassed glen.

The advancing figure was that of a postman with the mail-bag slung over his shoulder and a cudgel in his hand.

There, amid the lengthening shadows of the beech grove, where the Norman barons at one time hunted the wild boar, it was difficult to swing one's mind round to a postman in uniform prosaically delivering evening letters. One can without difficulty imagine a postman walking across Salisbury Plain, but a postman in the heart of Savernake Forest seems something born of unreality.

He gave a spur to my interest as we walked together by telling me that he was making his evening delivery, and that during the whole day he never stepped outside the fence which encloses the forest. He walked twenty-two miles a day, and the marvel to me was that there were sufficient houses inside the forest fence to warrant the appointment of a forest postman. There was, of course, the house of the Marquis, the agent, the steward, and a woodman's cottage here and there, but these were scattered about.

At night, in the breeding season, he has to give a wide berth to stags, which are then dangerous. On a pitch-dark night the breath

of a stag on your face must be an uncanny sensation.

Eventually we made the post-office, which was, I found, at Leigh Hill, one of the quaintest and smallest hamlets I have ever seen. It is on the verge of the forest, entirely enclosed in a palisade, erected, no doubt, to prevent the deer from leaping into the beautifully kept garden of the steward, or those of the five thatched cottages which comprise the hamlet. In these five cottages live the postman, a retired soldier, a widow, a gardener, and one other workman. The red and the fallow deer may be seen any day promenading Leigh Hill's solitary village street, if one may so term the beechen thoroughfare outside the palings. Here, we have a hamlet without a church and without a school, and but for the well-groomed appearance of the steward's lawn, one could easily imagine Leigh Hill to be a frontier settlement in the Wild West, with palings erected to protect sleeping pioneers against a sudden night attack.

Dame Gossip must be hard put to it here as the day wears on, for not a soul is visible in the afternoon. If you lift the latch of a gate which lets you inside the palisade, pass

along a garden path, and knock at a cottage door to ask your way, a forest woman, shy in poise and with the look of a startled hind, may grudgingly articulate a monosyllabic answer. I would warn any one taking this road for the first time of those cottage sirens who intimate that you should keep "straight on," for that is nearly always the way of perdition. All ways are straight on to the rustic mind grown accustomed to one road.

Yet it would not be an unpleasant thing to become benighted in Savernake Forest in the summer. It is indeed possible for that landless wayfarer, the tramp, to possess Savernake Forest in a more intimate way than does the Marquis who owns it on paper. Think of the regal splendour which envelops a man who is clothed in garments that the wind can whistle through, as he lies asleep in a five-mile corridor of magnificent overarching beeches!

As you emerge from the forest aisle of noble beeches carpeted with purple shadows, you catch your first glimpse of the valley of the Avon. It is a vision of beauty which leaps into view as the eyes traverse miles of rolling, open country, in which downs, with

bold escarpments like the prows of battleships, ride at anchor under a mauve-tinted mackerel sky.

To the sportsman, the sharp dip of Martinsell Hill will make the immediate appeal, for it was down its break-neck slope that Assheton Smith once rode behind his hounds at full gallop. But that was in the days when the English sportsman took some risk when he went out to kill. I made a detour round the base of Martinsell into Oare, where a well-known squire had parcelled out some of his land into small holdings—an oasis amidst downland, and let for a shilling or two an acre. Now, we learn in 1911 that this squire, Mr. F. E. N. Rogers, has been appointed one of the new Small Holdings Commissioners. At Oare I found some extensive farm buildings given over entirely to the training of greyhounds for coursing. The conversion of a farm into a training school for dogs, bred solely for sport, was indicative that unless small holders help to raise the standard of cultivation, increased national prosperity could not be looked for on the large farms. Here again I found the village schoolmaster the most active worker for small holdings.

Night had set in when I sought for a lodging at the hamlet of Wootton Rivers, a hamlet where evidently not only cottages, but men also, decay.

Consumption is rife in the village; the cottages dark and stuffy; the water-supply inadequate, and what there is of it is bad. It is one of life's little ironies that extensive estates from here straight down the vale are owned by colleges and hospitals (instituted presumably to educate the people in hygiene and sanitary science), and yet these very hospitals and colleges have strenuously opposed recent demands made by the people of Pewsey for land to till!

The standard of intelligence among the labourers here struck me as being lower than in most other rural districts. Either the more highly organised die of phthisis, or set their faces townwards, leaving the dullards to accept 12s. a week wages. The population in 1821 was 400; in 1911 it was only 325, in spite of the population of England and Wales having multiplied threefold.

It was close by here, on Milton Hill, that Cobbett on horseback pulled up and beckoned to a boy to lead his horse down the narrow

path, so that he could quietly drink in the beauty of the scene and begin to take stock of the products of the land he saw in front of him.

"Great as my expectations had been, at this first sight of the vale of the Avon, they were more than fulfilled. I delight in this sort of country; and I had frequently seen the vale of the Itchen, that of the Bourn, and also that of the Teste, in Hampshire; I had seen the vales amongst the South Downs, but I never before saw anything to please me like this valley of the Avon. I sat upon my horse and looked over Milston and Easton and Pewsey for half an hour, though I had not breakfasted."

Thus Cobbett the poet. Now for Cobbett the economist. "It seems to me one way, and that not, perhaps, the least striking, of exposing the folly, the stupidity, the inanity, the presumption, the insufferable emptiness and insolence and barbarity of those numerous wretches who have now the audacity to propose to *transport* the people of England, upon the principle of the monster Malthus, who has furnished the unfeeling oligarchs and their toadeaters, with the pretence that man

has a natural propensity to breed faster than food can be raised for the increase; it seemed to me the one way of exposing this mixture of madness and of blasphemy was to take a look, now that the harvest is in, at the produce, the mouths, the condition, and the changes that have taken place in a spot like this which God has favoured with every good that He has had to bestow upon man."

Thereupon our John Bull in Revolt begins counting the corn-ricks, the flocks of sheep, the herds of cattle. In one yard he counts "fifteen banging wheat-ricks, beautiful to behold." On another farm at Chisenbury Priory he counts twenty-seven ricks, and looks sadly round "to see the people who were to eat all this food." But he could not find then, any more than I can to-day, sufficient population in the valley to consume the year's harvest. Now, as then, the labourers in the valley of the Avon produce a great deal more than they consume.

He estimated the population that had in former years built and worshipped in the thirty churches in this valley of the Avon comparing it with the population existing in 1826, which, he declared, could all be huddled into the porches!

"These parishes contain 9116 persons who raise food and raiment sufficient for 45,580 persons, fed and lodged according to my scale, and sufficient for 236,740 persons according to the scale on which the unhappy labourers of this fine valley are now fed and lodged."

The workers indeed have been raising nearly twenty times as much food and clothes as they consume. They have been doing this for many, many years, covering many generations, and they are doing it to-day in the same manner, except that the farmer of to-day is aided by labour-saving machinery exceeding any known in the days of Cobbett.

I wondered whether I should catch any echo in my travels of Cobbett and his age, and so at Wootton Rivers I asked a villager, who seemed to be a genius at his craft, if he had ever heard of Cobbett. He said he remembered his father mentioning him. This man was a clockmaker who fitted his clocks with musical chimes, the mechanism of which he made entirely himself.[1] He had bought a

[1] Since writing these words I have learnt with pleasure that my friend has presented the parish with a clock (for the church tower), made out of bits of metal brought to him by the villagers from time to time.

number of old grandfather clocks and made new ones, setting them striking hymn-tunes and popular airs. In his little village shop he talked to me of his struggles in life.

His father, as an agricultural labourer, got only 8s. a week, and he had six children to keep. When my friend was seven years of age, his father's employer agreed to take him on to the farm as carter's boy for the magnificent sum of £3 a year and the promise made to the father that he would apprentice the intelligent lad to a trade. The £3 per annum was never paid, nor the apprenticeship ever entered into, for in three years' time the farmer died of drink without having paid one penny for the labour of the boy.

The boy stayed on at the farm under a new master. Then the station-master of Savernake offered to find him a job on the railway. He was now a lad of eighteen, earning 10s. a week and keeping his father, who was a widower, in the old farm cottage. On speaking to the farmer about "bettering" himself, the farmer gruffly told him that he could go and take the old man with him too, which, of course, meant the loss of a home, for the cottage was farm-tied.

He went to Maidenhead, and there began to mend watches belonging to his mates, and becoming proficient at his trade, and possessing a musical ear, he returned to his old village as a maker of musical clocks. He had entirely educated himself whilst acquiring a skilled handicraft, and by exercising thrift has saved a little money. He never, however, desires other children of the poor to endure the same hardships as he has fought through. It struck me that if one man, a mechanical genius, had managed to live through so many hardships, how many that we wot not of have gone under in the struggle for existence—left to rot in cottages impregnated with disease, where children have not sufficient food on which to develop into strong men and into mothers of an Imperial race.

At Pewsey, the largest town in this vale of the Avon (with the exception of Salisbury), I heard of numerous interviews being made with the County Council land-agents, but the opposition of the large farmers stifled any inclination that may have been felt on the part of the owners to let part of their large farms as small holdings. The vale here was murmurous with discontent, and one could

instance many cases of applicants who had become tired of applying, and were now footing it with those who make up that army of workers who have their faces set steadily for the towns.

The next village entered after Pewsey is that of Upavon. This is the place that the Wiltshire schoolgirl mentioned when her teacher spoke about Elijah going up to heaven. "Ah, yes," said the child, "I knows where Upeaven is. Granfer took a ram there once." It cannot have changed much since Cobbett's time, though our population has grown three times as great. In 1821 it numbered 464 souls; to-day it has only 430. It is of the type of the picturesque, semi-urban backwater, where the retired colonel likes to dwell, and possibly keep a nag on half-pay stabled at the old coaching inn with its ghostly empty chambers. Modernity once tried to conquer the place by putting up an aggressive shop-front which clamoured for notice as it pointedly obtruded itself into the main street. But soon shutters had to cover its brazen effrontery. It seemed wrong and quite disturbing to find a motor car being washed by a whistling 'Enery Straker on the banks of the silvery Avon.

Innovation here is but the innovation of the non-producing class.

It is at the next village, Enford, that the County Council can boast of its one and only triumph in obtaining land for the people in the vale of the Avon, and this had to be a compulsory purchase from a vicar. Though it is only 148 acres of glebe land, still it is a beginning, an earnest, let us hope, of what is to follow. It may mean the awakening of a village which seems now to be sunk into a state of torpor. But for one old man, and he a road-mender, no one was visible in the village street of thatched cottages, which must, I imagine, be the same cottages as Cobbett looked upon when he passed through this village in 1826.

"I call to mind," said an old man to me in the village inn, "when barrels and barrels of beer were tapped in this house every Saturday night. Now, what do they tap?" He looked around the dark old room, empty of life save for himself and myself, and then down pathetically at his empty pot. A beerometer would after all perhaps not be amiss as a bucolic census indicator.

We now come within the sphere of the War Office, with the broad arrow visible on

the door of nearly every thatched cottage, where, with the efficiency that one generally associates with the State, cottages are put into decent repair and the rent is no longer the uneconomic rent of the dilapidated farm-tied cottage, but is on a sound economic footing. The immediate result has been the raising of wages and the maintenance of a higher standard of life. Not that the cottagers have any more money to spend, but they have, at any rate, sound roofs and walls to keep out bad weather.

As we approach Bulford with its military camp we might expect a change from extensive to intensive culture, for here, surely, close at hand, is a splendid market for small holders situated in this fertile vale. Yet what do we find?

At Figheldean, which is about three or four miles from Bulford, a number of men duly made applications for small holdings. They were men thoroughly approved of both by the County Council and by the Inspector sent down by the Board of Agriculture, who reported favourably on the proposed site, and yet, in spite of all this, the scheme has somehow or other been blocked at Whitehall.

I found some lads there at work on the excellent school gardens, in the cultivation of which the village schoolmaster takes an immense pride. I saw a rod of land on which cauliflowers, beetroots, carrots and other vegetables were being grown, from which plot the boy had sold 7s. worth of vegetables, besides supplying his mother's table with quite a quantity. That is to say, he was making his patch of land produce at least £56 to the acre. On the same field, or the field adjoining, I saw a crop of thistles, among which a mangold plant could only be seen here and there. And this belonged to a farm of over 2000 acres rented by the War Office at 2s. 6d. an acre!

Now surely it would be better for the landowner, for the labourer individually, and for the nation collectively, to have a large field like this cut up and cultivated to produce more national wealth, and save lads from migrating to the towns, as well as land from becoming derelict.

A direct result of a backward land policy is, so the schoolmaster informed me, that the more intelligent boys, seeing no remunerative outlet for work, are steadily leaving the land

to swell the ranks of the denizens of the cities.

It was at Amesbury, a few miles farther down the vale, that Cobbett wrote up his notes after he had changed his wet clothes at the inn on 29th August 1826. Once a quiet village, Amesbury has now sprawled into a joyless, motor-haunted town, and I soon left this close petrol-perfumed atmosphere to take to the open thyme-scented Plain.

As I stepped out on to the open Plain, so generous of space and so niggard of homes, an airship, the wonder of the new world, hovered over the mystery of the old — Stonehenge. Though man has equipped himself with wings, Hodge, isolated, with bent back and toil-smitten hand, still works with prehistoric implements on land that is not his, at a wage of 12s. a week. Yet it is on his labour that the world of Science and the whole fabric of our Civilisation ultimately rests.

CHAPTER III.

THE GROWTH OF A NEW ENGLAND.

In the foregoing pages we have looked at a picture of England where the land is regarded by the owners as a happy hunting-ground for the wealthy, where thousands of acres are merely marking time, if not actually going back in cultivation, and where villages here and there are settling down into senile decay. In such places only the old are left. The young and able-bodied have drifted to the towns.

It is contended by some economists that the migration from the country to the town is the natural tendency in all European countries. "Migration is humorously described," says Thomas Hardy in *Tess*, "as the tendency of the rural population towards large towns, being really the tendency of water to flow uphill when forced by machinery."

The tendency in Germany of a migration from the country to the newly created urban district is due partly to the introduction of new agricultural machinery, such as we have seen operating in England and America for some time, reducing the number of farm hands; but it is also due to the much more potent fact that in Germany there are many congested districts of peasants. We have congested districts in Ireland, and by good government we are trying to mitigate the evil. But where in England can one put one's finger on a single congested rural area?

"I think the coming farmer," says Edison, "will be a man on a seat beside a push-button and some levers." In this way, I suppose, shall we get our large farms tilled and the crops harvested by the labour of one man; and yet it is curious (is it not?) that in England the greatest results per acre are obtained to-day by hand labour, and particularly in those districts where the hands work close to one another.

Fortunately for the well-being of our nation, there are some landowners who take their profession as landowners seriously, who regard themselves not merely as rent-receivers but as stewards to estates entrusted to them

by the Crown. The land to them is a factory, and not a sporting preserve. It is a national trust, as much as the land of Denmark is to the owners in that country, and it is a pleasure to turn from a district where the rabbit-warren and the pheasant preserve seem to be the abiding interest, to a district where the appearance of a single rabbit within an area of 10,000 acres causes much perturbation of mind to the tenant.

Monks have generally been shrewd agriculturists, and when they built their Abbey and made their high walled-in garden in the vale of Evesham, they showed surely that an intimate knowledge of Genesis did not deter them from finding England's Garden of Eden. Evesham is one of the earliest sites in England, and owing to the presence of certain salts in the soil it is found to be the best asparagus ground in this country. Plums too seem to grow there as they grow nowhere else, particularly the Pershore plum.

Probably the monks were the only gardeners in Evesham when the Abbey was built. A fruit-grower told me that his father remembered the time when only four carts left the town weekly, laden with produce.

To-day there are fourteen railways that lay their glittering steel roads at the gates of this garden of Paradise, and during the whole summer months two markets are held daily in the town.

So rapid has been the conversion of farm land into market gardens that out of the rural area of 10,000 acres, 7000 are taken up as small holdings of under 50 acres each. Indeed, so far afield has the extension of small holdings gone that the County Council has been obliged to knock at the gilded gates of the Duke of Orleans at Wood Norton, demanding admission to his farm land for English tillers of the soil.

It was only at the Enquiry, held by the Commissioner of the Board of Agriculture last autumn as to the desirability of enforcing a compulsory order against the Duke, that one heard any sympathy in this district for the preservation of the pheasant in place of the preservation of the English peasant, and that was voiced by the Commissioner! In two parishes in the Evesham district, namely at Badsey with its 1161 acres, and at Aldington with its 644 acres, every yard of ground is taken up in holdings of less than 50 acres.

Farms in Littleton are now being acquired by the County Council for small holdings, and the extremely busy agent for the County Council informed me, that, instead of there being a cessation in the demand for land, there is an increased demand every time a fresh farm is acquired.

At the 1911 census the population of Evesham chronicled 8341 persons, and as Evesham is almost entirely inhabited by gardeners and gardeners' labourers, we might surely say that the rural district of Evesham supports more than one person (man, woman, or child) on every acre. And yet I notice that the last report by the Worcester County Council (1911) states that there are still 372 approved applicants waiting for 2000 acres.

How came it that in manufacturing England, that amidst a nation of shopkeepers, we have actually one country town entirely existing and growing in prosperity on the labour of gardeners?

Besides the nature of the soil and the forwardness of the district, there are two economic factors in relation to land tenure which are a great incentive to high cultivation. Evesham is fortunate enough to

have had in the past a race of intelligent land-owners who realised that they obtained more rent from the small cultivators than from the large farmers, and that to let their land to the best advantage they must know, not only the character of their tenants, their capacity for work, but also on what terms a man without capital (save his garden tools) can make a start in order to win his own independence.

We will take, for instance, Mr. Raymond Webb as the typical Evesham land-agent or steward. Acting on behalf of a family of Evesham landowners, he will let an acre strip to a man who is a hard-working gardener's or farm labourer. Mr. Webb will probably know the man's Christian name when he applies for his plot as well as his working capabilities. The applicant may, at this time, be working for an employer, and if he applies for two acres, Mr. Webb will probably tell him that he cannot manage to keep two acres clean while working regularly for a master. "When I see that you are doing your acre well I'll let you have another bit somewhere else," he will say to the man; "and what is more, to give you a chance, I shan't charge you more than 30s. an acre for the first year

or two, and then you will have to pay me £2, or £2 : 10s. an acre afterwards." The man will probably begin to plant asparagus or fruit-trees, or even both, and when he has his second acre under good cultivation he will give up working for his master, apply for a third acre, and work entirely for himself. He may in course of time be working three or four different isolated strips on the same farm cut up for small holdings.

The other economic factor which gives the cultivator an incentive to do his very best, is one which operated at Evesham long before market gardeners' Acts were passed to protect tenants against predatory landowners. This is the "Evesham custom" which from time immemorial has made the new ingoing tenant pay the outgoing tenant (not the landlord) for agricultural improvements. For instance, the labourer who has planted out his asparagus bed or planted his fruit-trees in his one, or two, or three-acre plots, knows that should he wish to quit he will not be robbed of the fruits of his labour, or the little capital that he has sunk in his holding. And here, even handicapped by working on segregated holdings, the small man manages to produce a

great deal more than the large farmer with his self-contained holding.

In time, of course, when the orchards grow to maturity, the holding becomes quite a valuable property to the tenant, although the rent may still be but £2 an acre.

A tenant, who had the courtesy to show me over his various holdings, took me to one of them three miles from a station—an orchard of apples and plums and black-currant bushes. He planted these ten years ago. A few years ago he was offered £30 an acre for tenant rights. In the autumn of 1910, when I visited him, he was offered £100 an acre for his standing crops, *and £100 for the tenant rights.* He refused this offer. *His rent still stands at £2 an acre.*

Equipped with a better education than most market gardeners, and with staying powers greater than the usual middle-class man, he has been exceptionally successful, for, beginning with only four and a half acres, he now crops thirty-four. He takes his market garden as a very serious business, and motor-cycles from one of his scattered strips of land to another, superintending the work and returning to dictate letters to a typist. He is

fortunate enough to be more or less indifferent to markets and the little vagaries of salesmen, for he has now worked up a large retail business (from grower to customer), sending away his produce in boxes containing 6 lb. of fruit and upwards.

He has farmed in Canada, but prefers to colonise England, which is sadly in want of men with grit. He is the exception to the middle-class man who goes "back to the land." The young man who comes from a comfortable home and is able to secure a little capital is to be seen in Evesham for a season or two. As his white face becomes bronzed by the sun, and his white buckskin knickerbockers a little tarnished from riding on the manure cart, he graduates, in due course, from the state of pupilage, and pays the ingoings in order to take possession of some gardener's holding. Perhaps he pays too much for the ingoings; or perhaps on hot summer days the only breath of air is to be obtained on the golf course, or the lure of the seductive river fringed with willows is too much for him. So while the young master plays with the sculls, or the driving iron, the labourer sleeps in the asparagus alley. At any rate, in a year or

two's time he will be heard to complain that market gardening does not pay, and Evesham will see him no more.

Mr. Raymond Webb will tell you that the man who stays to make a success of market gardening is the man who has laboured from early days when that stern godmother—Necessity—sent him out to win sustenance from the soil. An estate plan will show you how some names quickly disappear from the innumerable one and two-acre strips, whilst others will be repeated yearly. Now and again a woman's name significantly appears.

But even the labourer has sometimes to succumb. To be suddenly plunged into a highly competitive business after spending many years as somebody's servant, throws many back again into the ranks of hired labourers. The failure of the young middle-class man is not at all astonishing, as it seems to be an article of faith with middle-class parents to send the duffer of the family to work on the land, where not only hard plodding is required, but also, in the stress of modern competition, a keen business aptitude.

Any one who is under the strange delusion that the rural worker is congenitively slow

and lazy should see him at work when there is anything to be gained beyond a subsistence wage by industry and quickness. He should visit Evesham at the time when asparagus is being cut, and this takes place in June and continues till Midsummer Day. Then you will see men at work from as early as two and three o'clock in the morning, ceasing only when darkness and sheer fatigue drive them to bed. Cases have been cited, and they are not uncommon, I am told, when men have crazily worked themselves into the lunatic asylum.

For the cultivation of asparagus the land must be thoroughly cleaned before planting the beds, and so the ground is generally occupied with a cleaning crop for the first year, such as beans, followed by winter cabbage. Generally the land is dug with the two-pronged fork so common in this neighbourhood, and if the ground is clean enough to plant the asparagus the first year, rows of lettuces or peas are grown between it in the beds. It is not till the third year that asparagus is ready to cut, and then, if kept properly cleaned, it will last a dozen years. The crop is worth about £40 an acre.

Another strenuous time is when plum-

picking begins in August. There are the feverish days too of strawberry, currant, plum, and apple picking, days when the whole available female force, big and little, of the entire neighbourhood are earning money for their husbands, fathers, and brothers.

The usual wages of women, when not paid by piece-work, is 1s. 6d. a day. Men are engaged for the plum-picking as a rule, and market gardeners like to get the same skilled hands down from Birmingham, Worcester, or elsewhere every year. One grower told me he had two old men coming regularly every summer for twenty years with their kit, just as though they were sailors signing on to voyage to Evesham year after year.

Last year, so loaded were the apple-trees, when my own orchard in Surrey was almost bare of fruit, that certain orchards close by the water's edge recalled to me vividly a cider district in Somersetshire "where wind-fallen apples float whole sunny afternoons in lazy pools above mill-dams." These were of the early Victoria variety, which loaded the boughs to breaking-point—a favourite cooking apple at Evesham. Besides the yellow of the Pershore plum, the rich purple of Bells and the scarlet

of Victorias attract the eye in the outdoor daily market, held in the middle of the old town with its gabled houses and its ancient abbey tower. Then, when you see the greens and yellows of apples and melons, the reds and purples of grapes and plums and tomatoes exposed for sale in the wicker "pots" with packing paper, blue and white, fluttering in the wind, the feeling is borne in upon you that you are no longer in England but in some provincial town of southern France.

Market gardening on your own, though, develops in time a species of business aptitude which may be useful in the individual struggle for existence, but it is a trait that certainly does not make for charm in human fellowship. The Aberdonian Scot would be hard pressed to get a living here. The desire to get the better of one's neighbour in a deal is unfortunately rife amongst the market gardeners of Evesham, and from it evolves the type of large market gardener who in time leaves off producing, as he finds it more profitable to buy and sell.

Some growers never attempt to sell their produce at the town market, but send it all away to Birmingham, Bristol, or Cardiff, direct to the greengrocers of those towns. I heard

of one market gardener who sent all his produce to the south of Wales, and went to the trouble and expense of collecting his money every week from his customers at Cardiff. "You make sure of the cash then, and you quickly settle all complaints," he said.

Mr. Fels has made a gallant attempt to establish a co-operative market at Pershore, and there is a co-operative society in Evesham; but unfortunately the ingrained individualism of the Evesham grower, fighting his own battles for so many years, tends to make him drive his own bargains for the best of his fruit, and to send the inferior to the co-operative society. As salesmen grow richer, and producers grow poorer, competitive marketing will inevitably destroy itself. The great captains of industry are refusing to immolate themselves for the sake of a worn-out economic theory. They are finding salvation in combination. The institution of impersonal, co-operative marketing will not only be a good thing financially, but it will also be a good thing morally for producers, since it is bound to lead to the standardising of goods, and in grading them honestly we shall avoid the mean shifts we are often put to to make the

"pot" of fruit present a fair face, though at the bottom we know it to bear quite another complexion.

There are those at Evesham, as of course there are everywhere else, who complain of foreign competition, but it seemed to me that it would be well for them to put their own house into order before waiting for the assumed millennium born of a single fiscal measure. This is indeed what the peasants did in France and Germany when they began to feel the pressure of the competition of the cultivated prairies of the new worlds.

It is not often that one comes across a grower who is an ardent Free Trader, yet at Evesham I had an interesting talk with one who presented the importation of foreign fruit in a new light to me. He said, "Our customers are greengrocers, and how long do you suppose a greengrocer would be able to keep his shutters down if it were not for the trade in foreign fruit, such as bananas, lemons, oranges, nuts? We English growers can only keep our shop open for about six months. By being able to keep their trade flourishing for the whole year, greengrocers have educated the public to the advantages of a fruit diet,

and since the large importation of foreign fruit there has been ever so much more fruit grown in Evesham."

I attribute the greater intelligence of the worker on the land around Evesham, compared to those working as isolated units on farms, not only to working for themselves, but also to living socially within a township. The mental stimulus gained by living close to one another is of great benefit to those who spend laborious days in the open.

It is said that there are more bicycles in Evesham in proportion to its population than in any other town in England. The system of renting land in separate strips, often at some distance one from the other, explains the necessity for making up on the revolving wheel the loss of time occasioned by not having a compact holding around the homestead. It is fortunate, perhaps, for progressive civilisation, that each little strip has not been owned by the cultivator. We might then have had a congested district similar to that in Donegal or County Galway.

The growers (or their landlords) have saved themselves one expense, which is always a source of trouble, and leads sometimes to neigh-

bourly feuds—the expense of erecting fences or hedges. Nothing but a well-trodden footpath divides one holding from another, and on most of the holdings all that is seen of a building is a small shed, called a hovel, where tools and stores are kept under lock and key. Sometimes a pigsty is to be seen, for without the pig the Evesham grower would be often at a loss for a complete fertiliser containing humus.

To obtain stable manure from Birmingham means paying from 8s. to 10s. per ton by the time the manure is carted on to the ground. The gardeners here are great believers in the efficiency of lime and soot—lime applied in the winter, especially around the plum-trees, and soot in the spring in the strawberry gardens. The other favourite manures are fish guano, bone, and nitrate. The grower who keeps a horse and cart will probably keep them behind his house in the town.

Before I visited Evesham I held the belief that the small holder should always have his cottage on his holding, and I planned my own holding of twenty acres with a cottage upon it. But then I was planning for a mixed small holding where stock is kept. Now that I have been to Evesham and observed the

rather high standard of intelligence there, I certainly incline to the township occupied by agriculturists with a wide belt of cultivable land extending around it.

Particularly do I favour this plan for the women, who often have to lead such lonely lives in the country. An Evesham agent told me that he himself was once a believer in the small holder having a cottage built on his land, and accordingly he had half a dozen detached cottages built on one, and two, and three-acre lots. He then found it extremely difficult to let them, and to-day they are not occupied by those who rent the holdings, but by men who work elsewhere as labourers !

The objection to them chiefly comes from the wives of the small holders.

One can easily understand the feminine revolt ; for when a woman is placed on a holding, there are, apart from the large horned stock, invariably the ducks, and the chickens, and the pigs to be fed by her, besides a man tramping in and out of the house all day long in muddy boots.

It must not be supposed that because farm lands have been let on easy terms to gardeners that rent in the form of unearned increment

does not exist in Evesham, for it certainly does. I found, for instance, one well-matured orchard rented at £14 an acre, and from £3 to £5 an acre is quite common in the immediate neighbourhood of the town. (During the fall of last year there arose a new lord of the soil who caused much tribulation amongst those who tilled the land.) And yet when a man has saved a fair amount of capital after a life of toil on the land (generally combined with a judicious amount of dealing), he shows no disposition, so the estate agents tell me, to purchase the soil that he has tilled for so many years. He knows that at any time he can make good in hard cash the trees that he has planted and tended for so many years. If he has but a small surplus put by, he uses that to extend his operations farther afield, becoming, as a rule, an employer of labour when he begins to cultivate more than three acres.

If he has amassed more, he will buy a building site in the town for erecting cottage property. An estate agent told me an amusing story of how a tenant, whom he knew at one time as a farm labourer, came into the office one day and asked the agent to sell him a building site.

"Any choice of a road?" asked the agent.

"Well, yes; I should like a bit in —— Road."

"Just one house for yourself to live in?"

"How much would that be?" asked the man, as though he were buying a Dutch cheese.

Thereupon the agent figured out a house that would cost, roughly speaking, about £300. "But you had better build two semi-detached cottages," added the agent, "which you could put up for £500."

"No," said the small market gardener, "I've only got enough to pay for one, and here it is in this yere bag." And to the amazement of the agent he threw a bag of gold upon the counter.

"But we can't do business in that way," exclaimed the agent, smiling at the simplicity of this son of the soil, who imagined that buying land was as simple a thing as buying a cow. "You'll have to see a lawyer, and I can arrange a mortgage in the meantime, if you like, for the extra £200."

But he would have no "truck" with lawyers, nor anything to do with mortgages. They always brought trouble, he said. He did not

owe anybody a farthing, and he never meant to. "Why should I see a lawyer?" he asked. "I've known you since you were a boy, and that's enough for me."

But as the estate agent insisted upon refusing the money until a conveyance had been drawn up by a lawyer, the poor man walked away with his burden of gold, sighing profoundly, as many an educated man has done, over the mysteries of land purchase.

The personal factor in the neighbourhood of Evesham entering into the contract between tenant and owner has certainly made for the social welfare of the neighbourhood. An experienced agent, who, on driving round the owner's estates, has a keen enough agricultural eye to observe which holdings are well tilled and which are indifferently done, is of some considerable value to the landowner; but he would not fulfil his function as adviser to the tenant as well as to the owner, if his duty stopped at merely giving notice to an undesirable tenant to quit. A good agent will inquire at a neighbour's holding. "What's the matter with Charlie?" he will ask (for he knows them all by name). "His land is getting dirty."

"Oh, he's got the hump," may be the

reply; or perhaps it is, "You can't work the land and stop in the public-house as well"; or, "He likes the water better than the land this hot weather."

Then the agent will make a point of seeing "Charlie," and if he finds in him a disheartened man and quite unfit for the life of the market gardener, he will advise him to give up the holding before he loses more money, and offer to find a new tenant for it who will pay him the "ingoings."

Whilst there are agents who act in this human way, there are others who are merely rent-takers; and on the whole those who rent land from the County Councils get better, though stricter, terms than those who rent under private landlords. The desire to make as much as possible out of an estate is, I suppose, inherent in human nature, and I could point to certain farms round Evesham where the owner is charging the large farmer on one side of the hedge 7s. 6d. an acre, while on the other side he is charging 50s. an acre to the small holder.

Now the County Council demands only the rent needed to cover the charges on the capital borrowed and the cost of manage-

ment.[1] At Littleton, for instance, where the County Council has recently taken over a farm, the rent to a number of small holders works out at 32s. an acre. The private owner close by was charging, I found, £2 to £2 : 10s. an acre for similar land to small holders, in spite of the fact that on the other side of the railway line the farm is bringing in the private owner only 18s. an acre as agricultural land.

Though intensive cultivation is the rule in the vale of Evesham, French gardening pure and simple is not much in evidence; and yet French gardening, as it is called, was practised in the vale of Evesham years before it became the latest cultural mode imported from Paris. The glass rims were used long before the cloches which have now superseded them.

There are three fairly large French gardens at Evesham, and one of these, the most interesting, at Bengeworth, imported 250 tons of manure in one season for about two acres of land. On this rich soil five crops were taken—radishes, lettuces, cauliflowers, onions, and melons. In the midst of an orchard of

[1] Mr. Walter Runciman, the new President of the Board of Agriculture, stated in the House of Commons (March 1912) that County Councils need not charge small holders with the Sinking Fund.

apple and plum trees, with their boughs of dark foliage pendent with green and red fruit, the cloches and frames make a pretty picture sparkling in the sun. Another French garden, which is said, I believe, to be the largest in England, seems to be run on the lines of a highly organised factory under glass, for on my asking permission to enter, the French *maraîcher* promptly demanded a fee of 2s. 6d. as gate-money. This was an "Evesham custom" of which I did not approve, so I bent my steps towards gardens less commercially organised.

It is usual with one landowner to break up a dirty field on a farm with a steam cultivator before he lets it to the small holders, charging them with the extra cost, which amounts to about 10s. an acre. This seems to me an excellent plan, for it is the arduous labours of the first year, often spent in grappling with a field smothered with couch-grass and tearing out every tentacle of it, which sometimes breaks the heart of the tenant. The farmer generally possesses agricultural machinery to enable him to clean his fields well, but the small market gardener has only his fork to rely upon, with his muscles in the

place of horse or steam power. It pays a landlord to do something extra to induce the market gardener to cultivate the rough fields of his estates; and not only does the Evesham gardener clean and improve the land, but, what is more gratifying to the owner, he pays a higher rent.

Reasonably enough one may ask, Why do not the large farmers convert their stock and corn farms into market gardens? This question I put to a successful market gardener who himself engaged labour. It is a question of capital, he answered. Very few farmers have more than a sufficient working capital to carry them over from Michaelmas to Michaelmas; and to embark on intensive culture means not only buying some thousands of fruit-trees and plants, and many hundreds of tons of manure, but—and this they would feel much more—also the finding of ready money every Saturday night for the extra hands employed.

Yet I did find one or two farmers who had embarked upon market gardening in the neighbourhood, though the market gardening was carried on in addition to the stock and corn raising. That the poor labourer should be in

one way better equipped for intensive culture than the large farmer has a significant bearing on the whole question of tillage. It is the personal factor which counts for so much in farming on a small scale. On a very large farm it sinks to vanishing point, and with it efficient tillage.

It is extraordinary how some of these gardeners make a living out of a few acres of land. Take a man, for instance, who bears a well-known Evesham name—Agg. A few years ago Mr. George Agg used to assist other market gardeners in their labours; now he obtains a living from the four acres of fruit garden that he rents. Another man, working at Littleton on the land which the small holders are purchasing through the County Council, told me that he made a "good living" from seven and a half acres—that is, from the three acres he owned and the four and a half acres he rented elsewhere. It is almost as difficult to get a man to own to making a "good living" from tilling the soil as it is to get a lawyer to own to making a good livelihood from conveying land from one owner to another. Yet he said it simply, without any desire to boast, for he knew that I myself

was a tiller of the soil and we were just two men with the hoe exchanging confidences.

In case I should have left the impression upon the reader that the Evesham wives very rarely help their husbands on the land, let me here state that this man was being assisted by his young wife, who made a very charming picture at work under a sun-bonnet. It is, however, a very different thing to come out and help the husband on some particular job, taking the day out like a picnic, to being worried by a succession of minor disturbances and interruptions on a small holding. The man and his wife were picking beans, and close by on a four-acre holding two women were also picking beans, whilst the male relative was away marketing produce.

The married couple were dropping their beans into a "pot," that is, a basket that holds 40 lb. One penny per pot will have to be paid for the cartage to the station three miles away, and then the auctioneer's fee, after railway carriage is paid, amounts to about another penny per pot. In spite of all this, as I have said, the man declared that he made a "good living." Another man with four and a half acres, with fruit-trees quite

young (they were only about four or five years old), told me he made a living from the vegetables cultivated between the trees. He did not say that it was a good living; and probably it was not.

These holdings were, I think, the only ones around Evesham where the County Council have sold land to the small holders; and on the occasion of my visit only one house had been built, though the land was bought some years before.

The impression that Evesham must be some small continental town, in spite of it being in English Worcestershire, is enhanced at eventide when the riverside Public Gardens are lighted, and golden arrows strike across the water, while from the shadows may be heard ripples of subdued laughter from idly drifting boats. From the Public Gardens float the strains of music and flash the vision of white skirts as young couples waltz the whole evening long. There is an absence of the dude, the demi-mondaine, and the glitter of wealth. These people are just young gardeners and their sweethearts dancing—spare, sinewy figures dancing in everyday dress. The only appearance of great wealth, of idleness cushioned in luxury,

is when a foreign duke or a deposed monarch makes a fugitive visit through the town, passing swiftly to the princely, gilded gates of Wood Norton. But this serves only to heighten the illusion that we are in some continental town.

CHAPTER IV.

"BUT FOR THE LAND, WE SHOULD HAVE STARVED."

"In one of those corners of our land canopied by the fumes of blind industry, there was on that day a lull in darkness. . . . In the cottage forges there would be but one worker, or two at most; in the shop forges four, or even five, little glowing heaps; four or five of the grimy lung-bellows; and never a moment without a fiery hook about to take its place on the glowing chains, never a second when the thin smoke of the forges, and of those lives consuming slowly in front of them, did not escape from out of the dingy, whitewashed spaces away to freedom.

"From these smoke-begrimed forges pale-faced women came out into the sunlight. They formed into a procession of women on

strike for better conditions, but never once did they lose the look of essential order, as if indeed they knew that, being the worst-served creatures in the Christian world, they were the chief guardians of the inherent dignity of man. . . . If they themselves were but the poorest, humblest, least-learned women in the land, for all that, it seemed to me that in those tattered, wistful figures, so still, so trustful, I was looking on such beauty that I had never beheld. All the elaborated glory of things made, the perfected dreams of æsthetes, the embroideries of romance seemed as nothing beside this sudden vision of the wild goodness native in human hearts."

So wrote Mr. John Galsworthy on 6th March 1911 in reference to the women chainmakers at Cradley Heath on strike for a higher standard of life at this sweated industry.

So Mr. John Galsworthy might have written to-day, and impressed upon our consciousness an even more pathetic picture of the conditions at Belbroughton, Fairfield, and Catshill, lying only a few miles away from Cradley Heath, but for one thing which has saved the people from a life of degradation.

That one thing was the land with the opportunity given to till it.

Here, nearly all the cottagers, both men and women, had been nailers—that is, engaged in the making of hobnails—for generations past, until the introduction of machinery in the manufacture of hobnails threw a great number out of work, and the little forges stood idle. Things then became pretty bad. Dire poverty drove many to poach and steal. "Twenty years ago," said the schoolmaster of Catshill to me, as we were walking down a little street swarming with laughing children, clean and carefully dressed, "you would not have dared to venture here as a stranger without police protection." Men would then tramp into Birmingham in search of work, but in vain. The poor rates went up by leaps and bounds, and in winter the squire of the parish opened a soup-kitchen. Then suddenly some one thought of the idea of placing starving labourers on land starving for want of labour. "*But for the land,*" solemnly said one of the men now working in the fields, "*we should have starved.*"

The Worcestershire County Council were the first to apply the powers provided by

the Small Holdings Act of 1892, and in the same year they agreed to buy at Catshill a farm of 147 acres at £33 an acre.

To show how necessary it is to break away from official tradition in dealing with uneducated people, the hand-bills and circulars consisting of over 2000 notices, issued in an official hole-and-corner way, received but one application in answer. The apparent apathy was probably due to the fact that the small holders were asked to buy the land. However, when a meeting was held at Catshill, and the Act was explained to those present, the Council satisfied themselves that a number of people were unable to find the necessary deposit of 20 per cent, and so agreed to take a certain number of men as tenants as well as purchasers.

Obviously a scheme for providing land for about twenty or thirty men, and these the better off of the parishioners, did not go very far to solve the problem of keeping starving men off the rates. Well-meaning bureaucrats so often fail to see the irony of offering to sell land to a penniless man.

Then in 1895 the Parish Council of Belbroughton awoke to the fact that they could

acquire land under the Allotments Act of 1890. They took 18 acres, which they let to thirty tenants. They made an immediate profit of £4 : 10s., and starting with this small working balance they were able, during the next eight years, to hire about 180 acres of land at a total rental of £268, which were relet to seventy-five tenants at a rent of £359 : 12 : 4.

At the present moment, I believe, the Parish Council let no less than 500 acres, and many men *who were once on the rates are now contributing to the rates as prosperous small holders.* I am told that the improvement in the *morale* of the workers here has been astonishing; and surely it makes for national welfare to have little children sitting among the corn-sheaves of their father's allotment, basking in the sunlight, with their baby eyes reflecting the blue of heaven, rather than letting them hang in an improvised cradle suspended from a nail in the fitful glare of a forge, whilst the mother was labouring, half-stripped to the waist, at the anvil.

Nail-making is still carried on in this district, but only in a half-hearted way, for most of the nailers are anxious to quit the

forge for the breezy upland farms. Yet there are still women who make nails as a side industry, relying on the land for the basic needs of life. I saw one at work, a sturdy, swarthy, broad-hipped, short woman, the mother of a large young family. She left her forge at midday to work on her husband's allotment.

The extremely interesting part of the re-colonisation of the farmlands of Belbroughton is the entire absence of philanthropic aid. There has been no bolstering up of land schemes formulated by townsmen for countrymen; no M.P. exploiting the movement to nurse a constituency; no Lady Bountiful to sap democratic initiative. The Belbroughton Parish Council, which have gone from success to success in leasing farms, are composed almost entirely of working men. In its jurisdiction over the land it reminds me forcibly of Ireland with its credit banks, where every one knows the affairs of his neighbour. No man, for instance, is allowed to grow a patch of grass in the midst of arable land which has to be kept clean for the growth of corn, vegetables, and fruit.

The same men who at one time went into

Birmingham with nothing but their labour to sell, and who had even that rejected, are now welcomed in the market-place of that same town, for have they not created something of which the town is in daily need? These small holdings are from twelve to fourteen miles distant from Birmingham, and it is common for one adult member to cart in the produce, market it, and return loaded with stable manure purchased for 1s. a ton. Yet, time and labour is wasted here, as at Evesham, in the lack of co-operative marketing. Some day these men will realise that they need not work so hard if they would but work together.

The holdings are of all sizes, from half an acre to twenty acres. The land is not particularly good; indeed it is rather poor. Strawberries seem to bring in the greatest returns in cash. Most of the small holders have to devote a portion of their land to growing hay, oats, or vetches for the upkeep of their horse or pony, and if co-operation were properly organised here much of this land could be more profitably used by growing vegetables and fruit. The plough and the horse hoe are used more than at Evesham, for in the general absence of fruit-trees there is

more freedom for the use of larger agricultural implements.

The creation of these holdings, besides giving a livelihood to the tillers of the soil, has enriched the manufacturers of Birmingham and the tradesmen in the district. I heard of a wheelwright retiring with a small fortune acquired by making carts and lorries for the small holders. That is one great advantage to us nationally in getting two blades of grass to grow where only one grew before; the extra blade brings greater wealth to the tailor, the bootmaker, and the grocer.

It struck me that at Catshill, near by, the small owners had rather overburdened their holdings with building operations. We know that the erection of country palaces by the merchant prince had the evil effect of rousing a spirit of misplaced ambition in the old-fashioned squire to rebuild his manor-house, and so become heavily involved in mortgages. Let us hope that the small holder will not be ambitious to overburden himself with spurious riches.

In the same county, at Castle Moreton, there is another interesting settlement of Parish Council small holdings where the Parish Council

have 220 acres let out to seventy tenants. These are quite a different type of holding to those we have reviewed, for their success depends largely upon their common rights for grazing. For generations the people here have been, more or less, small holders in a squatter-like way. Here too, it is asserted, there was much poaching and fowl-stealing, owing to the poverty of the district prior to the Parish Council taking up land in 1894. The population had dropped from 950 in 1881 to 720 in 1891. In 1901 it rose to 795, a rise due to the acquisition of allotments.

With grazing ground at hand, stock-keeping, rather than market-keeping, is the kind of farming pursued here. Welsh colts bought at the Hereford fairs are turned out on to the common, cider is made from the apple-orchards, and poultry reared for the Malvern markets. Most of the tenants follow some other occupation, and go out sheep-shearing, hedging, faggoting, pig-killing, and carting. Lady Henry Somerset is the chief landowner here, and she leases the land to the Parish Council at from 12s. to 28s. an acre. If the rent is not paid on audit day, the fine of 1s. is exacted; and so strict are they in insisting upon the

rent being paid that there is a rule, which, however, has never yet been enforced, that the land will be forfeited if there are fourteen days' arrears. There is after all no better land-agent in England than the Parish Council!

CHAPTER V.

COLONISING CROWN LANDS.

THE most remarkable visual effect produced by the recolonisation of England is obtained on the fenlands bordering the Wash. Though at Evesham gardeners have covered a larger area of ground, the effect produced is not the same, because nearly all the gardeners live in one township, and the aggregation of their fruit gardens might appear to the visitor who views them from the Abbey tower as one vast orchard undivided by fences.

Taking the high road from Lynn to Sutton Bridge you see, as you approach Walpole and Wingland, a number of white houses roofed with slates flashing in the sunlight, erected on a stretch of flat country which a century ago was unreclaimed marshland. Most of the houses are built on the seaward side of King

John's Bank. This land consists of 957 acres let by the Crown to the Lincolnshire and Norfolk Small Holdings Association. Fortunately for the small holders, the Crown advanced the capital to build these very substantial houses and farm buildings.

Indeed, it is at Walpole that you come immediately upon the best-equipped pair of small holdings to be found in the whole of England. This pair of semi-detached six-roomed houses with their farm buildings cost, I am told, £1000, and each stands in its forty or fifty acres of land. The houses may not be much better than the other houses built on these Crown lands; it is on the farm buildings where much of the extra money has been spent. No iron with its hideous corrugations, no tarred felt half-torn and flapping in the breeze, no dishevelled pigsties are to be seen here. All buildings are of solid brick with sound heavy timber supporting roofs heavily tiled, and every floor is concreted. Cart-sheds, bullock-sheds, stables, cow-stalls, loose-box, granary, are all under one roof, and the yard is substantially fenced.

Most of these holdings extending over this flat fenland to the Wash are of forty or fifty

acres. Potato-picking and pea-picking were in full swing on the occasion of my visit, and it was delightful to find that a farm of 200 acres which before 1907 gave a livelihood to three men only, produces now sustenance for thirty people. Farming, before the small holders came here, consisted of turning bullocks out to graze in May, locking the gate, and returning after several months to take them away to be sold, or finished off in stockyards.

Now the fields are alive with women and girls in blue, white, and pink sun-bonnets picking peas, and men and women lifting, sorting, and sacking potatoes. Extra hands have, of course, to be hired during the small holders' harvest of strawberries, peas, and potatoes ; and farm labourers from Norfolk, attracted by the higher wages that small holders invariably give, are housed and fed at the building opened by Lord Carrington, which looks to all the world like a mission-room.

It would be no exaggeration to say that upon this dreary, homeless expanse new villages have sprung up since 1907. On this fertile land, previously rendered almost sterile by bad farming, the plough was set to work, and from the breast of the plough has arisen not only

Potato-lifting at Sutton Bridge, on Crown Land small holdings, on co-partnership lines.

new and bountiful crops, but through its fecund contact with Mother Earth a new race of country children.

Fecundity is regarded here as a parochial and national asset, just as it is in our distant colonies ; indeed it is encouraged in a way that would have shocked poor Malthus and given much joy to the great stout heart of Cobbett.

At Moulton, near by, a young married man was pointed out to me as one who had applied to the Parish Council for one of the houses erected by the Crown on the five-acre Parish Council holdings. He was a very suitable tenant, but there was one thing against him—he was not married. However, on his giving the Council his assurance that he would find a wife within a given time—which he did long before the time expired—he was granted a holding.

One small holder of forty-six acres at Wingland had a family of no less than ten daughters, and a very charming picture they made, womanlike, cleaning up the rubbish on the strawberry field, while the father ploughed between the rows. Any one who knew this desolate, homeless district before 1907 coming suddenly upon an animated scene like this, must have felt as

though he were witnessing a pastoral play especially staged for his benefit with girls in their sun-bonnets forming the Arcadian chorus.

Market gardening here is carried on concurrently with stock-keeping, and corn crops are grown for the sake of the straw as much as for the grain, in order to get bedding for the horses, pigs, and cows, and finally to make manure-heaps. The fine cart-horses that some of these holders possessed and bred showed how individual attention to heavy live-stock pays even on a few acres.

Marketing, unfortunately, is carried on in the usual individualistic way, excepting in the case of one group of small holders farming 170 acres, who have formed a co-partnership society. Most of the potatoes appear to go up to London, whilst other vegetables and fruit find their way to the Midlands and northern markets. A great number of salesmen are tried by the small holders, each one pathetically believed in for a short time, in the way that many men rush off to a quack when they are ill.

A great deal of the fruit goes to jam-makers; not only fruit, but, I regret to say, carrots as well, which can easily be discovered

by inspecting the labels at Sutton Bridge station.

Socially and economically the creation of the small holdings in this district has been a distinct boon to the village of Sutton Bridge, so the tradesmen inform you, and they ought to be good judges. At the inn, however, which caters for those who travel cushioned on wheels and toil not, little liking is shown for small holdings, as the following conversation between myself and the landlady will illustrate.

"You are not one of those small holding people, are you?" she asked me, after I had ordered my supper and bed.

"Well, yes, I am," I answered hesitatingly. "Why?"

"Because I don't like them."

"Oh, I am sorry. Why not?"

"They are a mean lot. There was a party of M.P.'s that motored from Spalding this summer. They had been motoring for hours, inspecting small holdings. A special message was sent to the stationmaster to look after them, and some of them, I am told, were very rich. They came in here for tea, and the hired chauffeurs asked me whether they were to have any tea. So I asked the gentleman

who gave the orders, and he said 'No' quite sharply. Another young gentleman, feeling, I suppose, rather ashamed at drinking tea while the chauffeurs had to go without, said to me, 'Give them a drink; I'll pay.'"

Curiously enough I had a similar complaint made to me by a Wingland small holder, and I only tell the anecdote as an illustration of the insufferable patronage which small holders all over the country have to put up with from those claiming to be interested on their behalf. I myself have had to suffer bores gladly.

The Wingland small holder hospitably asked me in to lunch, and on my refusing told me that a party of M.P.'s had recently motored to his holding with their five motor cars. "They came in here," he said, "just as though they were on a bean-feast, and fell to eating my strawberries in a way that would have made them lock me up if I entered one of their gardens. Some of them asked me a lot of questions, whilst the others went on picking and eating the strawberries. At last, when they had taken a good feed, one of them came up to my daughter and said, 'How much are these strawberries a pound, for we ought to pay you for what we have eaten?' My

daughter answered, 'Father don't sell them like that; he sends them away to salesmen.' Thereupon, my daughter tells me, he brought out a handful of gold and silver and coppers, and presented her with—what do you think?—tuppence! *tuppence!*"

At Moulton one finds Mr. J. H. Diggle, and when you have found Mr. J. H. Diggle you are in the company of the most experienced small holders' land-agent in England. Mr. Raymond Webb of Evesham runs him close, but Mr. Diggle has a larger area and a greater diversity of holdings to administer. If the Board of Agriculture had been wise in its day, it would have appointed such men as commissioners.[1]

Mr. Diggle is, for instance, not only agent for the Parish Council holdings at Moulton, consisting of 922 acres, but also agent for the

[1] It is with great pleasure I learn since writing the above that Mr. Diggle has been appointed Commissioner for the Isle of Ely County Council—a council of large farmers hitherto distinguished only for what Carlyle would term pig-philosophy. They are the only Council which have displayed the colossal stupidity to object to applicants forming a co-operative Small Holders' Association. It is obvious that such associations save County Councils the extra trouble of collecting rents from individuals. Although 400 men altogether in the single parish of Elm have applied for land since 1908, not a foot of land has yet been granted to them!

957 acres at Sutton Bridge, Wingland, and Walpole, as well as agent for Lord Carrington's 972 acres at Spalding, for Sir C. D. Rose's 917 acres of small holdings at Burwell, and for the 337 acres at Swaffham, Carbrooke, and Whissonsett in Norfolk. These latter holdings, as well as the holdings at Spalding, Walpole, and Wingland, are all grouped under one association called the Lincolnshire and Norfolk Small Holdings Association.

This little record of duties to be performed shows not only that Mr. Diggle is a fairly active man, but also the extent of the small holdings in South Lincolnshire.

At Moulton, before setting out for the Parish Council holdings, which lie some way out of the village on that flat expanse which stretches out towards the Wash, I witnessed an instance of the national utility of taxing undeveloped land. A grass field owned by Mr. Diggle, costing considerably over £100 an acre —and I am sure he will not mind my saying this—held up as a possible building site quite close to the station, had a rental value as grazing land of 30s. an acre. On the passing of the memorable Budget, this was ploughed up and a crop of mustard sown by the present occupier,

who now pays £5 an acre for the use of it, and it produces approximately an extra £25 an acre towards our national wealth. I have never seen such a fine crop of mustard grown for seed. The men were reaping it with hooks, and it overtopped their heads with stalks like bamboo canes. Mustard grows luxuriantly on this black, fen, silty soil, and is a favourite crop with many farmers.

Close to the field of mustard is another bit of land which would have been classed as undeveloped land. This has now been cultivated by a small holder and fruit-trees planted in it; and though the tenant, a gardener, pays £5 an acre rent, he evidently finds the tilling of it profitable.

As I passed through Moulton to the Parish Council holdings (which were created after the passing of the 1894 Act by voluntary arrangement with the Commissioners for Crown lands), I witnessed a type of the old, isolated, uneconomic holding, owned by a man with insufficient capital to develop it. The cottage and buildings were falling into decay, and the weary old owner was looking as wretched as the horse he was holding. It has now passed into the hands of the mortgagers.

It was a pleasure to turn from this pathetic sight to the modern, economic small holding created to meet a strong demand and designed for modern agricultural requirements. Such holdings would not have been possible had they not been backed by the capital of the Crown, which has spent no less than £8000 for their equipment. A high rent is of course necessary to meet all charges, including interest and management, but after all £2 : 10s. an acre is not a rack-rent for five acres of this fertile soil, nor is £20 for a new cottage of five or six rooms as clean and bright as a new pin, with the five acres attached. There are other holdings for stock-keepers, and these range from forty to fifty acres. The five-acre men usually have some outside work to do, and they get the fifty-acre man, who keeps a team of cart-horses, to plough, harrow, and horse-hoe their land, on which potatoes form the chief crop. I saw a photograph of these fields taken just before the Parish Council decided to acquire them, when the land was full of thistles as high as my knee. Now this land, which was once given over to the bullock and the sheep, is peopled by a new race of English yeomen. In the place of thistles are potatoes ;

A typical 40-acre Stock-holding at Moulton, on Crown Lands, managed by the Parish Council. Seven years ago this was a derelict field. Now the Crown has spent £8,000 on these 1,000 acres cut up into holdings.

and in the place of sheep are the shining faces of little children. It is remarkable that this entire estate of nearly 1000 acres, with houses valued at over £8000, should be managed by a Parish Council consisting mainly of working men.

It is a land of opulent farmers, who know how to turn over to the best advantage the rich fenland soil, and it is significant that so much land round the Wash becoming derelict should have been left to small holders to bring to a condition of prosperous fertility. The rural area of Spalding is one of the few really rural districts of England which has considerably increased its population. In 1801 the population was 10,751, to-day it is 23,497; and it is a district of small holdings.

Driving through the village of Moulton, a figure was pointed out to me astride a black horse. It was that of a fine old man in a long brown shabby coat reaching down to his muddy gaiters. On his head was a black felt wide-awake hat, which crowned a face tanned with the sun of many summers and bearded with white hair reaching down to the bottom of his waistcoat. He looked the part he played in life—the patriarch of a large family

which he governed with a firm hand. "If he is worth a penny," said a Moulton man to me, "he is worth £30,000." We passed the field where four young men were hoeing in a row. Three of these were his sons, who had to work doggedly like day-labourers.

In the evening, at the local inn not far from Moulton, a dozen men walked into the coffee-room. Most of them were large farmers, though amongst them I noticed a man evidently not of the same class, for his clothes and boots were of rougher material, and he rarely spoke. The conversation centred round potatoes, and the advantages or disadvantages of spraying, when to spray, and how to spray, or whether "Dates" were not a played-out variety.

The conversation reminded me of others that I had heard in bar-parlours in Norfolk, where bullocks were discussed incessantly, or among the Downs, where "yoes" and "tegs" formed the chief topic of conversation, and of a little village inn in Wiltshire where I had to seek my bed by passing through the tap-room. "Well," I said to the landlord, as I bade him good-night, "what has it been to-night? Mangolds again?" This was at

the fall of the year, when the hunter's moon was riding to the full. "No," he said, "I've been fairly fed up with mangold-wurzels. I've had them every night for six weeks. Golden Tankards, Yellow Globes, and Long Reds, and as for their weights—Good Lord!"—a pause here which gave me to understand that no angler's inn could possess a greater poetical licence than his, and then with relief—"Thank heaven, it's been foxes to-night."

I naturally thought that it was an Agricultural Society meeting in the coffee-room of this Lincolnshire inn. I was mistaken. It was a political association which shall be nameless.

The landlady entered the room while "Dates" were still being discussed, and ostentatiously placed a spittoon on the floor, a proceeding which caused some slight embarrassment in the turgid talk. At the same time she summoned me to my supper, which was laid in another room.

"Did you take me?" she said, pointing to the coffee-room.

"Who could help it. Who's the offender?"

The spittoon was evidently intended for some one who could not, like Mark Twain's hero, "judge his distance to an inch."

"That horrid old man in those dirty boots —he is only a day-labourer. But it's politics, you know, and Mr. ——, the agent, says you must mix up all classes a bit for politics; and when I complain about my carpet, he says that the horrid old man is a very useful asset to us. I say *I* wouldn't give him the two syllables, the old wretch!"

In spite of the cry of agricultural distress, there seems no abatement on the part of the larger farmers in investing fresh capital in land or in adding farm to farm, and in the recolonisation of rural England the presence of so many large farmers on our county councils constitutes a national danger. There are no more progressive county councils in England than those of Norfolk, and the Kesteven and Holland County Councils (Lincolnshire), and yet we find in the purchase of farms by even these county councils traces of underhand work inimical to the interests of the ratepayers as well as to men applying for land.

In Norfolk, a certain farm sold during my tour was, I discovered, purchased quite by accident over the heads of the County Council by a near relative of a member of the

Small Holdings Committee. This, though it may have been quite a straightforward transaction, is significant of the value of knowing beforehand the reserve price fixed by the county council at a public auction.

In Lincolnshire I actually found the chairman of a County Council and member of the Small Holdings Committee publicly bidding for a farm after the reserve price the County Council were prepared to pay had been passed by a clear £1000! This means that the chairman, as a private individual, believed apparently that the farm was worth more than the price fixed by the County Council valuer. If so, was it not clearly his duty on committee to state the price he would be prepared to pay? For it is evident that if the reserved price is fixed too low the ratepayers lose an opportunity of a good investment, and intending small holders are deprived of their land. Surely if a sense of honour is not great enough to restrain councillors from entering into competition with their own council, some law should be passed to prevent such actions, similar to the law we have to-day, restraining councillors from voting with regard to contracts in which they are personally interested.

On the other hand, there is the question of placing too high a price on land purchased by ratepayers. When land is purchased voluntarily the continual payment of high prices can only be avoided by altering the *personnel* of the council, and thus checking the inclination of a council of landowners to keep up the price of land. But when land is purchased compulsorily the appointment of private county surveyors as arbitrators between landlords and the council leads to mischievous results, for self-interest too often induces private land-agents to place a high figure on the value of the land. Wherever compulsory purchase is necessary it is in the interest of the ratepayer and the small holder for the Board of Agriculture to appoint its own salaried surveyor.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FARMER AND LABOURER AS RURAL COUNCILLOR.

Though few farmers are ardently in favour of small holdings, yet there is a type of farmer who sits on county councils, who, whilst not being a strong believer in small holdings, is not unsympathetic. He does not like to see any farms in his county going back for want of thorough cultivation, and is willing to purchase land where there is a large number of approved applicants. Without this type of farming county councillor, Worcestershire, Lincolnshire, Cambridgeshire, and Norfolk could not have gone ahead with small holdings in the way in which they have done, though in all these councils progress would have been seriously retarded without the insistent appeal of men who are not of the farming class.

As a typical representative of the not unsympathetic type there is my friend X. whom I visited when I was in Norfolk pursuing my investigations. He is the tenant of three farms, each of about 300 or 400 acres. He takes a keen interest in rural housing; he sits on the county council, calls himself a Progressive, and in Imperial politics is a staunch Conservative. A man in middle life, he has farmed since he was a boy, working on his father's farm, which before that was farmed by his grandfather. His brothers and uncles are all farmers. He is therefore wholly of the farming stock. Farming is to him a thorough business undertaking and not a plaything. Sport with him is quite a secondary consideration. When I saw him some years ago he drove a smart dogcart into Norwich when making his weekly journey to the bank. Now he drives a motor car.

"Come," he said to me at his hospitable farmhouse, "let me drive you round to my other farms, and we will have a talk about small holdings. I haven't very much time to spare, for I shall have to be over at the seacoast this afternoon to look at some dilapidated cottages on behalf of the Council."

I thought he displayed a rather unusual amount of eagerness in his invitation. First he showed me a splendid crop of standing wheat and some samples of turnip seed which his men had thrashed with the flail upon the rick-cloth. By carefully selecting the seed each year from the best plants, he was able to sell the seed at a high price and make as much as £56 an acre from his field of turnips.

"Now," said he, "come and see the allotments I sublet to my men on this farm." The strips of oats and wheat on these allotments were pathetically short compared to the crops of my friend, and the land on which they grew was dirty.

"There you are," he said, "there are *your* small holdings. What do you think of them? I help the men all I can. I lend them a waggon when they want to carry their corn to the thrashing machine. I even thrash it for them. Whenever a man wants an implement he has only to ask for it. So all that is made easy for them; yet you see failure staring them in the face here. A man cannot serve two masters; he has no time for both jobs. When the Small Holdings Act of 1907 was passed, my bullock-man came to me and said—

and mind you he had Sunday as well as week-day work—'I want to speak to you about something, sir.' I replied, 'Well, fire away, Bill. Anything I can do to help you?' 'Will you try and get me a five-acre holding, sir?' he said. I hesitated for a moment before I replied in these words, 'Yes, Bill, I will try and get you your holding from the County Council. I know you to be a hard worker and that you have put by a little money. But, mind you, I am not going to have you working yourself out on your own land early in the morning, at midday, and in the evenings, and resting for the rest of the working-day on *my* land. You must choose whether you work for me or for yourself.' He decided to work for himself. He bought some beasts in Norwich, dropped £17 on them the first year, and then emigrated to Canada."

"The fault," I answered, "with that man, and with your men here, is that they are skidding along in the old ruts they are accustomed to. They imitate what you do, without your facilities for buying manures or for marketing the produce. Fancy trying to fatten bullocks on a five-acre holding! Why don't they leave these things to you and other large farmers,

and grow the smaller things in which hand work or personal attention is more needed?"

Here, too, small holdings are out of the track of trade. So cut off have labourers been from the outside world, that a woman lived in the parish for seventy years without ever stepping beyond the confines of a small common!

When I left my friend I lodged at a small farmhouse, from the windows of which hardly anything could be seen save acres and acres of corn and roots. Herds of bullocks are fattened in the yards in the winter, and grazed on the marshes in the summer, and yet with all this open, fertile farm-land around us it was extremely difficult for me to get a new-laid egg for my breakfast, and the only milk to be obtained came from a cow with a tubercular udder! Cream was imported from Norway for visitors, and the butter came from Brittany or Denmark; and rather than drink milk from a diseased cow, I, in the heart of England's premier agricultural county, drank the milk preserved in tins which a Swiss manufacturer thoughtfully provides for pastoral Englishmen!

Here were milk, and cream, and butter, and

eggs badly needed in these Norfolk villages and small towns, and yet few were troubling to produce them.

Still, Norfolk has not been behindhand in one form of small culture. There is a splendid series of fruit gardens on the belt of land contiguous to the Broads of northern Norfolk, running from Stalham to Martham ; and it was among the orchards of Potter Heigham that I told my friend X.'s story to the village schoolmaster.

Like many a country schoolmaster, this one had been endeavouring for many years past to get land for the labourers.

"Ah," he said, when he heard the story about serving two masters, "that reminds me how, after a long struggle with the local farmers, we, through the Parish Council, first obtained allotments for the men. One farmer in particular had been very bitter about it, complaining that he would lose his labour force. One day I pointed out to him five of his men, who were allotment holders, who seemed to be hoeing his turnips fairly quickly. 'Well, I must own up,' said the farmer, 'I made a mistake. These men, working for themselves, have managed to get into a

quicker stroke, and I seem to be getting the benefit of it.'"

Here at Potter Heigham the Parish Council consist entirely of working men, and I lighted on the chairman hoeing cabbages on his holding of six acres. He keeps three cows and a sow, and does some carting for the other holders. Black-currants and raspberries are the two chief crops cultivated on the allotments here as well as at Hickling and at Ingham. Black-currant picking was over when I was at Potter Heigham, but raspberries were still being picked by the wives and the children while the husbands were working on the farms. Individual marketing was, unfortunately, the rule here as nearly everywhere else; and judging from the prices being paid by the dealers for the raspberries and black-currants, the middleman must be reaping a small fortune out of those who labour in the fruit gardens. There was some talk of the formation of a co-operative society being evolved out of the murmurous discontent, and it is to be hoped that the village schoolmaster, with the aid of the Agricultural Organisation Society, will achieve something before this book has been printed.

There is one man, also a parish councillor, whom I must mention, because his annals of toil are remarkable. He appeared to be about fifty years of age, with a whitening beard on a brown, healthy face, whose serene eyes looked out at you from under a broad-brimmed Quaker hat. He was digging on his five-acre fruit and vegetable garden, and digging with one hand only, a hook doing duty for the other hand. He lost his left hand years ago, and with amazing dexterity has been earning his living since by catching eels and working on the land—earning sufficient not only to keep himself, but also to build a cottage worth £130, and purchase by degrees five acres of land.

In the little out-of-the-way village of Ingham, near Stalham, I found a man who was working on one acre of allotment, growing black-currants and raspberries. He was a middle-aged man who could neither read nor write, and yet by his intelligently directed labour he had grown £70 worth of fruit on his allotment. His acre produced for him two and a half tons of black-currants and half a ton of raspberries. Probably, if the fruit had been better marketed, he would have

made £80 or £90 instead of the £70 he received from a dealer. Six years ago this same site was producing only £5 worth of food towards the national larder when it was farmed in the ordinary way. Indeed, on the other side of the hedge may be seen to-day land farmed by the capitalist-farmer producing barely more than this amount, whilst on the allotment side of the hedge the illiterate labourer is producing fourteen times as much.

The land here is of a clayey loam, and the allotment holder was wise enough in the first instance to plant the Bos Koop variety of the black-currant, which is fairly free from the big bud. He first planted potatoes between the bushes, but now, of course, the bushes are big enough to meet and prevent intercultivation. This exceedingly industrious and intelligent gardener wants more land, but he cannot get it. It is the usual story: the parish council here are dominated by the farmers, who seem to resent this labourer working independently of them.

Being a good craftsman he takes on piece-work, such as thatching and cutting rushes on the Broads. Nothing would induce him to return to the life of a farm drudge. One of

his sons has gone to Canada, like so many other of the young men in this part of the world, if they have but a chance given to them. I have recently heard from a gentleman in this neighbourhood who knows of forty young fellows who, during 1910, left for America, the States drawing away the brightest and hardiest of them across the Atlantic.

Possibly the emigration of the best of England's manhood from our rural districts has received a slight check in recent years since the small opening has been given to them to become their own masters. A hard, penurious life may still be in front of them, as hard as that which their fathers endured, but they will, at any rate, gain that priceless gift to most Englishmen — the freedom to carve out their own destiny instead of having it roughly hewn out for them by some taskmaster.

Not far from Ingham an interesting experiment in applying the principle of tenant co-partnership is being tried.

On the slopes of an old British camp, from whose wooded crest ships that sail the North Sea are visible six miles away, I found the men of the new settlement at work. It was an ideal site on which to earn one's daily bread.

Here one can watch wherries with their pleasant brown sails coming down from North Walsham sweeping round the copse, threading their way along the sluggish Ant and tacking across the open Broad, making their inland voyage to Great Yarmouth eighteen miles away. Church towers, islanded in isolation amid ploughed fields under wide skies, could be counted by the score. These were many, but cottages were few. Every one of the half-dozen men I spoke to were still lodgers, some of them grass-widowers. Working here by day, and sleeping by night in some crowded old cottage perhaps a mile or two away, they patiently await the building of those concrete cottages that are to be erected on this merestead of a hundred acres, now known as "Wayford Tenants, Limited," Smallburgh, by Norwich.

Every one of these men had known something of co-operation before they came to Wayford. They possessed what is so often lacking in small-holding communities — a guiding principle to knit them together. They are all co-partners in the same venture, and three of them sit on the committee with Mr. W. L. Charleton, the chairman, to whose

foresight and energy this new departure in the organisation of small holdings owes its inception.

None of these men seem touched with those peculiarities which one finds, for instance, in the disciples of Tolstoy, who go back to the land. One has been a bricklayer's labourer, another a gardener, another a carpenter, another a dairyman. They bore the stamp of men who are accustomed to tread the solid earth without losing their heads in the clouds. They seemed happy, and, animated by a fine spirit, were confident of success. The bricklayer's labourer, as hard as nails, had begun to dig at 4.30 in the morning, and was still at work at 8.30 P.M., when I found him planning a henhouse on a board in the barn by lamplight.

Those short of capital could earn ready money, whilst their crops were growing and maturing, by delving and screening gravel in the heart of the hillock overtopped by the wood. A mile and a half away was a railway station—Stalham. On the one side is Norwich, sixteen miles distant, and on the other, Yarmouth, reachable by rail or water. On the coast-line from Cromer to Lowestoft

lies a string of watering-places which should form a ready market for farm produce during the summer months.

What has made Wayford so suitable a site for small holders is not so much the gravel-pits and the timber overhead—which, however, are exceptional assets on an agricultural estate where building material is required—nor even the rail and water facilities, nor the excellent co-operative organisation, but the kind, light, though rather poor soil.

As a rule either stubborn clay or chalky land, with about four inches of top soil, is marked out as suitable land for small holders on which to break their spirit. Here is a soil which can be ploughed with a pony or even a donkey. On one side of the hedge I saw a man ploughing with a pony thirteen hands high, and on the other side an allotment holder had a pair of donkeys harnessed to a small Norfolk plough. And though spade labour is comparatively easy on land as light as this, yet it was interesting to find that the plough was invariably used.

Modern agricultural implements have already been purchased by the Society, and a plough with a pair of horses can be hired for

7s. a day, if the small holder chooses to put his own hand to the plough.

Hardly a fence is to be seen to divide holding from holding, and to swallow up the much-needed capital; for, beyond the strip of grazing land bordering the canal, no land is to be put down to permanent pasture, which rightly enough is considered a waste where tillage can produce fodder crops of double the quantity. It is hoped that on a six-acre holding enough will be produced to feed four cows, instead of the regulation number of two cows to six acres common to the grass farms of England. Every cow put out to graze will be tethered, and abundance of valuable fodder is expected from the mixed crop of peas and corn, which in Denmark is either cut green and fed whole, or, after being weathered, is stacked and then thrashed all together.

It used to be possible to obtain large quantities of sludge from Barton Broad to spread over the fields. This was dredged by the marshmen at a trifling cost, but, now that a heavy tribute is levied by an exacting overlord, this industry has been taxed out of existence.

The special public interest, however, aroused by Wayford Tenants, Limited, lies in its exceptional economic basis. It is this which marks it out as a unique settlement of small holders, and its further development becomes a matter of national interest.

Besides the lack of driving force behind its administration, there were many gaps in the framing of the Small Holdings Act. It is for the filling up of these gaps by associated effort that the Wayford Society was created. Tenant co-partnership has been applied to town areas with astounding success, and this is an attempt to apply the same principle to an agricultural colony with the addition of several distinctive features.

Each small holder becomes at the same time the tenant of his own holding, for which he pays a rent varying from 30s. to 40s. an acre, and a part proprietor of all the holdings. He is tenant and landlord combined. He has to take up shares to the value of his holding, but the whole amount need not be paid at once. A minimum of £10 in shares has been fixed with a minimum contribution of 5s. a month towards the rest of his share capital. He is never burthened with the task of having

to find a purchaser for his own individual holding should he wish to leave, but with the necessity only of transferring his shares to some one else. He has the welfare of his co-partner almost as much at heart as his own.

A credit bank has been formed, and all buying and selling will be done in co-operation. A Danish extension waggon, costing £20, has been imported. This is a wonderful waggon, very light, and serviceable for every kind of work on a farm, from that of drawing timber to carrying hay. It can be shortened or lengthened as desired. Stripped of its sides at a moment's notice, it can be converted into a trolley with a platform. Shortened, it can be used as a dung cart or as a market cart. Altogether it is the small holder's all-purposes cart.

Every one must wish success to this enterprising undertaking to resettle on the slopes of the old British camp this new race of self-supporting English yeomen. The husbandman has come, and come to stay ; but he, unfortunately, still goes to his daily toil homeless. There is still the crying need of cottage accommodation.

The Norfolk County Council have, on the

whole, shown a commendable spirit of enterprise in acquiring land. Travelling to the fenlands of Lincolnshire, I heard a Norfolk estate agent remark to a gentleman in the train, "This is like the good old days of thirty years ago. I have been selling a 300-acre farm to-day at £50 an acre." The price went over the County Council reserve price, and it was bought by a family of farmers.

The Norfolk small holdings are not as noticeable as those of Worcestershire, because they are more scattered; neither have they the good fortune to possess the striking houses and buildings of the Lincolnshire Crown land holdings. Nevertheless, the Norfolk County Council take the lead in 1911 with 6231 acres to their credit since the 1st of January 1908. Somerset and Cambridge come next, each with 4000 acres, whilst Lincolnshire, divided into three county areas—Holland, Kesteven, and Lindsey—has acquired over 2000 acres in the same period. The progress made by the Cambridgeshire County Council is largely due to the efforts of the chairman of their Small Holdings Committee, Mr. E. O. Fordham, who has now, I am glad to see, been appointed one of the six new Commissioners. Cambridge-

shire, by the way, has not always had encouragement from the two Commissioners originally appointed to supervise between them the whole of England and Wales! These gentlemen reported adversely on the hiring of 650 acres at Soham, but the County Council proceeded with the acquisition of the farm, and of the twenty-five tenants there are only three who do not earn their entire living from their holdings. These holdings have succeeded better than most, probably because co-operation is a live factor here where there is actually a co-operative oil-engine and mill for grinding the produce of these holdings.

Bedfordshire, a county of natural small holdings carved out before the passing of the 1907 Act, is rapidly becoming a county of market gardens. This is due largely not only to the fertility of the soil, but to the fact that it can be easily worked at any time of the year. It has, too, the economic advantage over many counties where a new race of market gardeners are of mushroom growth. Like Evesham, it has bred through generations a race of skilled market gardeners, men who at carrot-bunching time, for instance, can earn as much as 10s. a day. Here, around such

districts as Sandy and Biggleswade, as little or no stock is kept, all superfluous hedges have been uprooted, and so keen are the men to obtain small holdings that many travel on their cycles a dozen miles a day to and from their strips of land. Manure is railed from London in large quantities at fairly reasonable prices, but rent bears heavily upon the cultivators of the soil, for as much as £4 an acre is charged on sites near the station. "We cannot afford," said a grower of carrots and marrows to me, "to put our land under ordinary farm crops."

The Bedfordshire County Council make the fifth county which has spent over £40,000 in the acquisition of land; and in meeting the ever-increasing demand of the rural population for land, they have, up to the 30th of June 1911, provided applicants with 2759 acres; but altogether a thousand applicants applied for 12,350 acres. There are still two-thirds of these waiting for land!

Where he can work with a free hand, the parish councillor is one of the best agents to bring about the recolonisation of our empty countryside. This I have witnessed in my travels again and again.

As Mr. Charles Roden Buxton, in his admirable sketch, *A Living Village*, observes: "The Parish Councillors know every acre as intimately as they know every man. No great landlord is half as business-like as they. There is a healthy pressure of public opinion which keeps pushing up the standard of efficiency. There is a bad tenant here and there, no doubt, but it is not very pleasant for him as he walks down the village street of North Creake among his fellow-ratepayers and the tenants who know that the weeds from his neglected ground are sowing themselves in their clean and constantly tended holdings. I talked with a small holder at Wottan who hoed his turnip-field nine times last year and this year has done so seven times already. His would be a surly greeting, I fear, to a neighbour who let the thistles grow."

I have said advisedly, "where the parish councillor can work with free hand," for in spite of our much-vaunted democracy and the pæan of triumph trumpeted by politicians over the passing of the English rural Magna Charta of 1894, parish councils as executive bodies are far from being democratic. Their executive power is restricted within narrow

limits, so my experience goes after serving on two different parish councils. And the appearance of Hodge as an unpaid public servant is no assurance of a democratic force at work. I remember a wealthy shipowner, who was also a large landowner in Kent, endeavouring to impress me by saying, "Hang it all, look at me! aren't I a democrat? My gardener and gamekeeper and bailiff sit on the Parish Council, *and I am chairman*!"

On parish councils constituted like this one Hodge, of course, sinks to a mere cypher. Yet it is not the landowner whom he fears to face so much as the large farmer. Even where the landowner is often willing to let his land to small holders the large farmer is in opposition. It is not that the large farmer has any greater measure of human wickedness than any other class of the community. He is often very hospitable, and generous in his gifts; but when he is asked to give up a field or two of his farm, he feels that he is asked to give up some of his income for the purpose, forsooth, of making some of his labourers more independent, eventuating probably with the loss of some of his best workers.

From his narrow point of view, looking

at life through a pea-shooter, he may be right. On the other hand, I can point to some districts in England, such as in Lincolnshire, Cambridgeshire, South Hampshire, and Worcestershire, where an increasing number of small holders have been a useful reserve force of labour for farmers to call upon at harvesting time. Furthermore, there are many large farms of 2000 acres and upwards which are too large for the individual farmer to work economically. He would, in many such cases, have less worry, less work, and a larger margin of profit if he cultivated more thoroughly a farm of less than half the size.

CHAPTER VII.

POOR MOORLAND HOLDINGS AND THE ENGLISH SQUIRE.

We have been observing small holders at work on the fat fenlands of Lincolnshire, in the fertile vale of Evesham, and on the rich belts of land in Norfolk. It is true that we have seen men working prosperously on the poor, hilly slopes of Catshill, Fairfield, and Belbroughton, but there is actually a corner of England where labourers are earning a living by the sweat of their brow on land so poor that the owner described it to me as "too poor for farmers to cultivate." This estate is to be found in that corner of Dorsetshire that lies on the verge of the New Forest. The name of the village is Verwood.

Here we come to an estate which, as far as land tenure is concerned, is worked under a

system of enlightened feudalism—a despotism without a despot.

On a poor sandy soil, the largest part of which is still heather-clad, with a clay subsoil, and as open to the winds as a Yorkshire moor, scented by the resinous pines of the New Forest and the wild thyme of the common, live a race of small holders, tilling holdings varying from one to twenty acres. The older tenants are living in mud cottages made of the clay subsoil which lay under their feet—cottages built by them *on land which is not theirs.* Many of them are yearly tenants of houses which their fathers built, and are legally liable to eviction. In fact, the practice which has gone on for generations is much like what we have had in Ireland, but Verwood is unlike Ireland in that the tenants do not seem to be troubled about building their houses on sand. Here it is the landlord, the squire of Verwood, who is troubled about the insubstantial, uneconomic footing of his own tenants.

He is the lord of the manor of some 2000 acres, and his family in past days have by degrees permitted parishioners to cultivate with the spade the rough heather-clad moorland over which the family exercise manorial

rights, charging a rent of only 10s. an acre. One by one mud huts began to go up on these rented allotments. The building material was cheap and handy. The clay for making the yellow-ochred walls was under their feet; the heather for thatching was cut from the Common around them; and rough timber could be had almost for the asking from the forest near by. With great faith in the integrity of the squire's family, tenants went on building on land which was not their own. The property being entailed, the squire himself could not grant the freehold, but being troubled over possible eventualities, especially as he was childless, he got an Act of Parliament passed in the 'eighties giving him power to grant eighty-year leases. In spite of this, there are tenants to-day living on land rented by them only annually, who refuse to be bothered with the eighty-year lease to which they are entitled!

Rents are rarely raised here, for the reason that they generally are elsewhere. They are not raised because the industry of the tenants has made sites more valuable. At Verwood they are fixed at 10s. or 15s. the acre. This landlord apparently never says to his tenants,

"As the village is growing, and as I am becoming richer, I shall therefore have to charge you more rent."

Market facilities are not easy at Verwood. True, there is a railway near, but it is only a connecting link between Salisbury and Wimborne, and no one living within the stretch of country lying between those two places takes it at all seriously. It is just a thread on which, spider-like, an engine leisurely spins its way, dragging in its train a freight of weary human beings to the web of town life.

The cattle market at Wimborne may be useful to stock-keepers, to which, of course, cattle can travel on their own legs, but the best market town for garden produce to the growers at Verwood is Bournemouth, fourteen miles away, and that is reached by road. Hence the railway is of little avail to the people here; but as forest ponies are cheap, nearly every small holder keeps a pony and cart and markets his own produce in Bournemouth, which, as a growing seaside town, is an invaluable market centre for the small holders in and about the Forest.

Verwood is one of those places where greater stability in colonisation is assured by

the fact that the tillers of the soil do not put all their eggs in one basket. Unlike the tramp in the *Adventures of Harry Richmond*, they do not believe in a life which "on one day you lay on your back and the skies rained apples, while there were other days when you wore your fingers down to the first joint to catch a flea." It is a case of simple living, it is true, but a simple living which is equable and free from want. Their little orchards are sometimes full of apples, but they will accept this golden shower as coming by the grace of God, and give thanks for it at the Ebenezer Chapel. They do not lie under a tree to wait for the golden globes to fall into their open mouths. Underneath the boughs may be beehives, and whilst bees are storing honey, the man would be out in the field harvesting his oats, hoeing his roots, or driving his cart to market with his cauliflowers and carrots, his eggs and his butter.

On one holding I picked an apple from a tree which was planted a hundred years ago. It was planted in the filled-in hole from which the grandfather of the present occupier dug the clay for building the mud cottage. The present tenant, who has now

many grandchildren of his own, has brought up a family of fifteen, sustaining them out of the produce of his holding of eighteen acres, which was originally started by his grandfather turning over an acre of heathland. Health and fecundity seem borne upon the wings of the winds which sweep across the Downs.

Inside, on the two-feet thick clay walls of the cottage, under a roof of heather thatch, is hung a picture of Gladstone; an oleograph of Queen Victoria; a lurid battle scene of Tel-el-Kebir, savagely crowded with incidents of slaughter, adjoining the text "God is Love"; and on a little table under the window a Bible reposes on a snow-white antimacassar. Nothing would induce the old man now to leave his mud cottage, where he said it was cool in the summer and warm in the winter, for a red-brick, slated, modern house. His son could live in one of those, he said scornfully. Perhaps he felt like the old gipsy whom some one tried to persuade to leave the hedgerow for a brick dwelling. "No," he said, "I can't play any tricks with my health at my time of life by living in a house."

Our small holder, like most of his neighbours, belonged to a thrifty, hard-working,

labouring class, which have worked themselves into the position of being their own masters. During the week he and his fellows are ardent believers in the gospel of Carlyle, and on Sunday the Ebenezer Chapel is filled with the sound of their mournful voices, their black coats, their black ties, and their ebony boots shining for the glory of God.

Riches do not come to any one quickly on these poor moorland holdings; indeed, I know of no one living on the verge of the Forest, excepting one man, who has amassed enough wealth to endanger his chances of entering Paradise. This man started, they tell me, without a shilling to his name. He possessed, however, a demoniac energy. From the lord of the manor he obtained permission to break up two acres of the heather land at a rent of 10s. the acre. Now he is the owner of five mud cottages.

It is a common sight here to see, built close up against a mud cottage thatched with heather, another modern cottage built of brick. This will invariably be the cottage of a newly married son, whilst the father will be the occupant of the mud cottage. Here, it will be seen, our stalwart sons of the soil remain in the country

and help to increase the population of a bold and thriving peasantry. There is no lord of the manor on this estate who interdicts the building of new cottages, no large farmer with power to prevent land being used by the labourer for his own benefit. Thirty years ago hardly a cottage was to be seen across the stretch of moorland heath. To-day, blue smoke rises into the clarified atmosphere from many a cottage chimney.

It is probable that success—that is, success which is not measured by the ordinary standard of wealth, but by the creation of a healthy and thriving peasantry earning their livelihood free of taskmasters—is due to other causes than that of the absence of rack-renting and the presence of cheap building materials. In the first place, these small holders, like many others in or round the confines of the New Forest, have extensive grazing rights. This enables the cottagers to shut up their entire piece of grass land for hay, letting their cows graze on the common, where they can pick up a living in the summer on the rough grass, the gorse and the tender heather shooting up after fire has burnt the coarser stems.

Here handicraft too is closely allied to

tillage. Pot-making finds work for some of those who do not live entirely out of the produce of their land. Some of these pots, perfumed in some mysterious way as though the scent of the pine and the heather had commingled with the clay, find their way to Regent Street. One man with five acres devoted a good deal of his time to hawking about these pots in the surrounding villages. The clay is under their feet, and the potter's wheel is not an expensive plant to set up. In the district of Ringwood gloves are made, —the shop supplying the wool, and women and children earn money at this trade in the winter evenings.

One man I visited turned the heather to account by making besoms, thus giving himself a winter occupation. He has, however, to go farther afield than Verwood for his heather, for here the cows of the small holders crop too closely. Four shillings a cwt. is what he has to pay to another lord of the manor for cutting it, but he can buy the wood for his handles cheaply, and he sells his besoms to traders at 1s. 9d. a dozen. He had the quick dark eye of the gipsy, and the gipsy's lithe, sinewy body, and I saw more than one physical

indication that there was a strain of gipsy blood in the original squatter immigrants from the Forest.

As the squire and I left his holding together a little incident gave me an insight into my host's character. The besom-maker detained him for a moment, pointing out that the wooden bridge leading to his cottage needed some repair. Without an instant's hesitation this owner agreed to have it done.

He was as unlike that type of old English squire which Meredith portrays in his Squire Beltham as it is possible for a squire to be. Gentle in demeanour and courtly to all alike, he seemed to walk and drive about as the good shepherd of his parish. Quite indifferent to the religious or political convictions of the cottagers, he has won their esteem not only as a benevolent landlord, but as one who confers upon them the dignity of expecting them to maintain their independence of mind. A scholar at heart and simple in his tastes, he and his wife live in a manor-house that might be mistaken for a country doctor's residence. Instead of stablemen (for one horse served the squire's purpose), you saw a staff of gardeners superintended by his wife, who is a passionate

gardener. Yet even in the luxurious indulgence of gardening selfishness is not allowed to dominate. The garden is thrown open to the public every Sunday, a pleasaunce of which the cottagers are not slow to avail themselves, especially if they have visitors from a distance.

His wife has strong objections to acting the part usually played by the Lady Bountiful in an English village. She considers it impertinent to knock at a cottage door save in the same spirit as that in which she would exchange cards with her other friends. Needless to say, no case of want is allowed to pass unnoticed in spite of her objections to district visiting.

Amid the heather-scented common is a bathing pool for the villagers and a dressing shelter erected round it. This, of course, has been carried out by the squire.

It is evident that at Verwood, at any rate, rents are not "squeezed out of the bones of the labourers," as Cobbett phrased it, in order to add to the magnificence of the landowner's establishment. The squire is quite indifferent to splendour, so his tenants are better off than are the tenants of those who keep up large

establishments. He takes his ownership of the land as a stewardship for which he has to account, and the tillage of it is of paramount importance.

I have known two other squires who in different ways remind me of the squire of Verwood, though all three have different and strongly-marked personalities. Each belonged to the older type of territorial magnates, a type now probably passing away and giving place to the merchant-prince squire, or to the Council of landowners.

One of these was a poor man: at any rate he felt himself passing poor on £4000 a year. This sum represented the rent derived from three villages that he owned and the farms surrounding them. He had to maintain an old, plain-featured, but historic mansion. He took his business as landowner as seriously as the owner of Verwood. He was always at war with his tenant farmers, because he was ever striving to claim greater independence for the labourer. "I have it on my conscience," he once said to me, "that I hold the lives of all these people in the palm of my hand. Is any man good enough for the position?" He might indeed have quoted Horace, and said

that "Nature has appointed neither him, nor me, nor any one else as lord of this particular land."

On another occasion, when he was discussing whether he should erect a statue in his park close to the bowling-green, he groaned over the thought that he ought not to spend the money, because some of the labourers' cottages wanted re-thatching.

The other landowner was a wealthy man, and the occasion on which I met him was when I, with the temerity of youth, asked him to hand over a portion of his town property to the people as a recreation ground. Evidently my suggestion interested and amused him greatly. He, an elderly gentleman, brought his lawyers with him to meet me, then a young man of twenty-two. Coffee and cigars were produced, and he asked me with courtly frankness to "Fire away." Having heard my say, he blurted out, "Why don't you ask these sweating millionaires who make money on my land to shell out? They get off scot-free without any responsibility." This gentleman was the late Squire Evelyn of Wootton, and it was not many years after our little discussion, which I am sure highly

entertained this excellent old squire, that Sayes Court, the property for which I had pleaded, was handed over to the London County Council.

Coming to live near to his estate, I heard many an anecdote which gave me a greater insight into his character. For some reason or other he was always at war with his vicar. If the sermon was not to the squire's taste, he would publish an antidote in the form of a pamphlet. "I hate petty tyranny," he would say to a friend of mine. "If the people must have a tyrant, *I'll* be their tyrant." And he saw to it with a searching legal eye that when he built a new schoolroom no parson should ever be allowed to sit on the committee!

Once, so I am told, a labourer was reported to him as having stolen a faggot bundle that fell from the estate's wood-wagon. Immediately the old squire went to the labourer's cottage and told the wife that he was extremely sorry that there had been this fuss over a mere bundle of faggots, and that he apologised for any animadversions made on her husband's character by his servants. The amazed woman was then presented with a sovereign. But before the squire left, he, shrewdly divining

cottage gossip, called in the woman from the cottage next door and gave her a sovereign also.

It is probable that had the type of English squire such as that of Verwood and of Wootton been common throughout the length and breadth of our land, the day of the appearance of a public body as a rural owner would have been delayed for an indefinite period.

CHAPTER VIII.

GREEN PASTURES AND A CO-OPERATIVE POULTRY DEPÔT.

From the poor moorland holdings of Wessex it is delightful to enter a rich pastoral county which has been one of the most progressive counties in the poultry industry since the passing of the 1907 Act. In this county we see what amazing results may be achieved by co-operative methods in poultry-keeping, even where the soil is unfavourable.

Amid these green pastures we find a prosperous co-operative poultry depôt, which of its kind is unique. One would expect to find such an institution on the light, sandy soil of Heathfield, in Sussex, so favourable to the rearing and fattening of table birds, but hardly in the heart of green Somerset, on cold retentive clay pastures where the lias stone,

but eighteen inches beneath the surface, forms a rocky basin for water in rainy seasons.

The station is Glastonbury, an old-world village warmed into fresh life by the erection of new, bright-red brick houses, set amid verdant pastures at the foot of the grassy Tor crowned by the old Abbey tower.

A mile and a half away lies Street, where grey stone houses stand amid meadows richly garlanded with apples. In the autumn the air is pungent with cider. But cider is not the only produce which helps to pay the rent. Speckled Sussex hens, whiskered Faverolles, sleek Buffs, and yellow-legged Leghorns strut the green sward canopied with pink and white blossoms.

There is, unfortunately, very little ploughed land in Somersetshire, and if you stand at the top of the Polden Hills and search the magnificent vale of Sedgemoor, the patches of red and purple earth here and there stand out with the distinction of isolation. A field or two of arable land is seen from Collett's Corner, so named because it was here, in the good old days when wages were 8s. a week, that a man was gibbeted for stealing a sheep. These fugitive purple patches are at Compton

Dunton, where you will find a body of real Somersetshire yeomen who have farmed small holdings from time immemorial, men who are earning an entire livelihood out of their twenty or thirty-acre farms. It is they who are growing a little corn on these patches of red earth, more for the sake of the long luxuriant straw—which, owing to its scarcity, they can sell for £2 a ton—than for the grain.

Elsewhere, alike on the verdant plain and on the hillside, graze sheep and cattle, and where they are, of course, the cheery blue smoke of cottage chimneys is seen at rare intervals.

Around Street, however, houses are on the increase, and the price of land is rapidly rising. The population here has increased during the last decade: a rare enough incident in rural England. But it would not be fair to attribute the increase alone to the multiplication of small holdings and poultry-keeping, for there is a boot as well as a skin factory in the village, and yet undoubtedly, small farming has had the effect of keeping people in rural cottage homes.

Street, with its population of between 4000 and 5000, is relieved from that which so often

has a blighting effect upon certain districts—the land being in the hands of one land-owner. It is the district of many small owners—a district of great sobriety, of thrift, of stubbornly-held and freely-expressed opinions. The principal inn is a temperance one, the result of Quaker influence, which strongly predominates here. And so honest are the people, that when the landlord of the inn departed for Sunday evening service with his family he told me that I need not trouble to lock the street door if I went out, for "all the Street folk were honest."

The starting of the "Street and District Poultry-Rearing and Egg-Collecting Society" came about through the inefficiency of the higgler. Ten years ago the higgler did as he liked with the poultry-keeper; now he is unable to get a living in Street. Unfortunately for him, at that time he did as he liked with Mr. William Reynolds, who had just bought forty laying pullets. The higgler called regularly every week in the winter, but when January was on the wane, and eggs became plentiful and cheaper, the higgler called no more.

Then it was that Mr. Reynolds began to

find his own market. As he had to find it in the spring, he thought he might as well secure for himself as good a market as he could all the year round. He was still faced with the difficulty which confronts every poultry-keeper working alone: he still had no chance to enter into the best market of all —providing dairy and restaurant companies with guaranteed new-laid eggs. So he induced others to join him in the formation of a co-operative society in order that they could all market their eggs together in large consignments. The spirit of discontent at having to take 6d. a dozen for eggs from the higgler knitted poultry-keepers together, transforming competitors into co-operators.[1]

Originally starting in a small way, and occupying humble premises, the Society now rents ten acres of land and some very substantial farm buildings with a farmhouse. The Society began merely as an egg-collecting society, marketing the eggs for members; now it is that unique organisation in England—a co-

[1] The Framlingham Co-operative Society (Suffolk) was started in a similar small way by the schoolmaster, Mr. Warren. The first depôt was an old stable; now it has six depôts, and the number of eggs marketed in 1911 reached 4,000,000.

operative incubating, rearing, fattening, collecting, and selling Society.

To give some idea as to the size of this industry at Street, the long cow-shed of the old farm is now turned into a fattening shed capable of holding 700 birds in their coops, ranged along the walls. This side of the business entails the employment of a man who is fattening with a crammer, and plucking birds practically all the year round, and this department last year brought in a net profit of £200. Birds were bought from members at about 1s. 9d. each at twelve weeks old, and so well were they fattened and so skilfully presented for the table that the price rarely dropped below 3s. a bird, and this, it should be remembered, was the wholesale price. Ten thousand out of fifteen thousand birds were fattened in this manner.

The large stone granary of the old dairy farm has been converted into an incubating shed, where twenty-two incubators, capable of hatching at one time 6870 chicks, stand on the non-vibrating earthen floor, and the loft above is used for storing chicken food. Then there is the cool stone-walled room like a cellar, where 85,000 eggs were preserved in

waterglass last year, in tanks capable of holding 5000 to 7000 eggs each. It is useful to note that eggs are popped into the preserving tanks when the market drops below 10d. a dozen, and 3s. 6d. spent on waterglass is sufficient to preserve 5000 eggs. These eggs are taken out at Christmas and sold as preserved eggs at about a penny each.

The old stone pigsty has been converted into brooders. Inside the farmhouse you will find the offices of the Society and the rooms where the eggs are tested and packed as they are delivered by the collecting vans. Here also lives one of the officials of the Society.

A large trade is done in day-old chicks, and 5000 of these were sold last year. But the incubators are also used for hatching the eggs for members at a small fee. This I consider to be an excellent plan, for as the incubators are in the charge of an expert they are worked with skill, and much labour in the small holder's home is saved by this form of co-operation. Outside, in one of the orchards, beautifully sheltered by apple-trees and fragrant with the scent of pink and white blossoms, are some forty or fifty foster-mothers gaily painted blue, as well as a new brooder-

house capable of holding and mothering 600 chicks at the same time. These houses are carefully and systematically cleaned, the manure being mixed with peat-dust and spread on a meadow over the hedge, where a bountiful crop of hay is sure to be harvested.

In another orchard run the chickens in their second stage of development. Here, of course, they are in cold brooders. This orchard is divided into four sections by wire-netting. In the third field are to be seen the birds maturing for the fattening pen.

There is another department which is a very useful one to members of the Society. This is the department which buys the poultry food at wholesale prices for members. Surely this part of the Society's work might very well be extended, so that all the feeding stuff required by farmers for cows and pigs and horses, as well as for poultry, might be purchased in this economical manner.

In the early days of the Society it made the mistake of allowing its members to bring in their own eggs, instead of collecting them systematically as it now does by the co-operative van. Farmers and others would often bring in eggs a week old, so that by the

time they were on the breakfast-table in town, after passing through the hands of the wholesale and retail merchants, they would be at least ten days old; and during hay and corn harvest, when the farmers could not spare the time to bring the eggs in once a week, and broody hens were perhaps allowed to sit on the eggs for a week undisturbed, the results were disastrous. That is to say, a large percentage of the eggs had to be returned as unfit for the market, or were sold as "seconds," or "cookers," at a reduced price.

Though now the Society has to pay for the upkeep of a van to collect the eggs two or three times a week within a radius of ten miles, a saving in labour is effected in the testing-room, and a higher average price is maintained in the marketing.

Instead of getting 6d. or even 5d. a dozen for their eggs at the cheapest time, the members now never obtain less than 8d., as well as the trading profit made in selling them to large dairy companies at 1s. a dozen. Whilst the usual wholesale price in March and April is quoted at 11d. a dozen, any restaurant-keeper should be willing to pay 1s. a dozen for guaranteed new-laid eggs.

In the winter, members will be getting about 1s. 8d. per dozen, plus the trading profit, and the Society shrewdly pays members a higher dividend on the eggs sent in during the winter to discourage members from disloyally making their own private bargains when there is an insistent demand for eggs. Moreover, in making contracts for the year, if a dairy company wishes to have twenty dozen a week in November, it has to agree to take sixty dozen a week in April—that number being the most economical quantity to send by rail.

The eggs are packed in bottomless cardboard divisions, with wood-wool placed between each layer inside a strongly made crate, which is returnable. The Society makes these crates for the outside trade.

It is the old method of weekly marketing in distant parts of England which has given the Calais egg, quickly collected and promptly dispatched from Dover *en route* daily for London, the precedence as a new-laid egg. But at Street the Englishman beats the Frenchman; and at Street the Englishman beats the Dane at the co-operative rearing and fattening of table birds. The thing

which does handicap the British producer in Somerset is the high railway rate for farm produce to London. The railway companies defend their tariffs on the ground that the producers do not bulk their goods in the same way as the continental peasants. How, though, can they explain away the fact that in Denmark the railway rates for small consignments are from five to seven times as cheap as the rates charged by British railways?

It has certainly not been an easy matter to make poultry-keeping pay in Somersetshire. The birds are kept on cold, damp clay of such a nature that neither the Dorking nor the Minorca will flourish on it. Eggs and birds have to travel 133 miles to their largest market —London—and low prices have ruled the local market from time immemorial. So I think it may be fairly said that, if co-operative poultry-keeping pays in the heart of Somersetshire, it might be made to succeed in any English county if organised on a thoroughly sound business basis.

At Street there has now sprung up a race of poultry experts, not only inside the premises of the Society, but also outside. Egg-lore may be heard at every cottage door,

and the cottagers who keep birds are not by any means typical tillers of the soil. Many are boot operatives, others are skin-dressers and mechanics.

By now they have learnt many things in the art of poultry-keeping at Street. They take good care, for instance, that their male stock birds are either of the Sussex, Faverolle, or Buff Orpington breed, producing plump, white-legged chickens, whilst the scraggy-legged Leghorns are penalised to the extent of placing an embargo of a penny a pound less for their flesh. They do not trouble about whether the eggs are white or brown; nevertheless, it happens that the birds I have mentioned conveniently lay brown eggs.

The Street poultry-keepers have learnt too that the fox is their greatest enemy, and a price of 5s. is placed on every fox's head, which shows that the people here are not among those who imagine that the British Empire is dependent on fox-hunting for its unique place among European nations.

The secretary of the Society, Mr. William Reynolds, after ten or twelve years' experience with every breed of fowl, has come to the conclusion that the two best all-round breeds

for the table and for eggs are the Buff Orpington and the Faverolle; and he practises what he preaches, for on his own little farm he runs hens of these two breeds, every one of which is religiously trap-nested when it lays.

It is remarkable that, though there are over two hundred poultry-keeping members of the Society, there is not a single poultry-farmer, pure and simple, in Street. The Street man is far too shrewd to regard poultry as anything but a side line. He never develops from the poultry-keeper to the poultry-farmer.

That a co-operative poultry society can be started with very little capital is exemplified by the history of the Street Society. The share capital at the beginning stood at £44 : 12 : 10. Now, even with its large turnover, the capital is only £534 : 17 : $6\frac{3}{4}$. The capital required by the individual member is only 7s. 7d. The 7d. is for a rubber stamp for marking eggs, 2s. for entrance fee, and 5s. for one share.

It has been a debatable point whether the members of the Co-operative Society as poultry-keepers at home succeed in making this side industry pay. We know very well that as members of a collective organisation, as

rearers, fatteners, and marketers of eggs, they do make a profit. We can see this from the published accounts of the Society. But as individual poultry-keepers, do they make birds pay by selling their eggs and chickens to the Society? It is very difficult to get properly kept accounts from the members. I am satisfied, however, after interviewing several of them, that poultry-keeping does pay, and it sometimes pays in an unlooked-for way.

A member told me that he ran a number of birds on three acres of land, accumulating a great deal of poultry manure, which he carefully stored. He bought a field of eight acres, which had been rented at £8 an acre. He then bought for a small sum many loads of roadside scrapings, which he mixed with the poultry manure, giving his field a dressing with this mixture. The first year he took a heavy crop of hay off this meadow, and the next year he let it to a farmer for 30s. an acre, thus adding, he contends, a capital value of £100 to his investment.

The Street Society has not, I am glad to say, been content to rest on its oars as an isolated successful society. It has taken a leading part in the formation of the British

Poultry Federation, into which has been merged the National Poultry Organisation. It was obvious to all intelligent poultry-keepers that it would be fatal to success to have each poultry society competing against the others in various parts of the country for large contracts. By federating and keeping a record at some central office, the affiliated societies prevent large dairy companies from playing off one society against another. This is a step in the right direction towards the complete and effective organisation of our national poultry industry.

The Street Society has still two strongholds to conquer before it can be assured of an abiding success. One is the railway company, and the other is the market-place in which the producer can hand over his wares to the consumer over the municipal counter.

The Wholesale and Distributive Co-operative Societies on their part should identify themselves more thoroughly than they do with co-operative farm production. It should be as natural as the dawn following the night, for the co-operative store to buy their eggs and their poultry from a Co-operative Poultry and Egg-Supplying Society. But the trading

co-operative societies do not seem to do this, and even the local Co-operative Store at Street was not, on the occasion of my visit, a customer of the Poultry Depôt.

Though there are signs of comparative prosperity in the immediate neighbourhood of Street, when once you get outside the sphere of urban fellowship, life is lived here at a low ebb. Wages are low, and many of the cottages dotted about the Polden Hills and Sedgemoor are unfit for human habitation. Tubercular bacilli seems to have a permanent home in many of them. The lias stone, suitable as it is for the flooring of pigsties, is hardly good enough with which to pave the living-room of a human being. Rheumatism and consumption are the rule and not the exception, but it is not altogether to the paved floors that this disease is traceable. The great cause for consumption here is the lack of good, nourishing food for the children of the cottagers, for which the parents cannot be blamed. It is the direct result of low wages.

So deeply rooted is consumption here, and so alarmingly universal, that a local association has introduced lady doctors and outdoor shelters, which can be hired. It

seemed to me, though, that the surest way to root it out would be to make conflagration of all the old cottages, build new ones, and institute, as recently suggested by the *Saturday Review*, a minimum wage which shall ensure parents the opportunity to feed their children with wholesome and nourishing food.

Much might be done throughout this district from Glastonbury to Bridgwater to knit together the various small holdings societies, and by co-operative effort institute a service by motor and steamboat to Cardiff. The land on the southern slopes of the Polden Hills is to a large extent land which is merely marking time. Why not plant it with fruit-trees? I say this advisedly, for until the yeomen of Somerset plough and begin to plant I do not see that great progress can be made in the small holding movement.

Though the Somersetshire County Council are progressive, the tendency hitherto has been for the County Council to select among the applicants for land the publican, the wheelwright, the blacksmith, the village grocer, butcher, bootmaker, or baker who wants a meadow to turn out his pony, cow, or pig,

rather than the agricultural labourer. I do not blame the County Council for this, for it is natural to the Council to select men who have sufficient capital with which to stock the land. Here the labourer has not yet come into his own. It is not like Evesham, where a man practically has only to buy a spade or a fork, and perhaps a few loads of manure, when he makes a start. Here it is a matter of buying a cow, or other live-stock equivalent to its value. And it is evident that we are not going to get very much farther with agricultural production if the grass-fields of Somerset are to be used only as accommodation land on which to turn out a pony or graze a few sheep. Grass-land must either be more heavily stocked or else given over to those who have literally put their hands to the plough.

CHAPTER IX.

THE ISLANDS OF INTENSIVE CULTURE.

It is Great Britain's most southern island that should be the small holder's paradise, the island which, according to Jerseymen, annexed the larger island of England by conquest and so built up the British Empire.

Nature has been kind to this island set in a sapphire sea, for though the soil is not naturally very fertile it slopes gently from north to south ; frost visits it but seldom, and the sea yields up to its shores an abundance of good manure which can be had for the labour of picking up and carting. This ocean weed is ploughed in as we plough in green manure.

It is a striking fact that only six farms on the island are above the English statutory fifty-acre small holding. The whole area of the island is only 27,717 acres, which is less than

one-third of the smallest English county. Yet it produces enough food to feed a nation. In one year its exports in potatoes alone amounted to 53,100 tons, which were valued on the quay of St. Helier at £356,305.

Still more striking is what this island can accomplish in stock-keeping. The cultivated area of Jersey is 19,171 acres, and as the Jersey farmer is a good husbandman, only 3000 of this is allowed to remain permanent pasture. The low-lying rich meadow-land only is allowed to remain as grass-land, and if you deduct from the arable land the acreage which does not produce food for cattle, but produces potatoes and tomatoes for human consumption, I estimate that the 11,000 cattle in Jersey are kept on less than an acre to a cow, for besides this head of cattle to maintain, there are some 2400 horses, and 5000 pigs as well.

Yet in England we farm on the principle that it is necessary to have three acres of land in order to keep one cow!

I have said that Jersey should be the paradise for small holders. Unfortunately, however, whilst Nature is kind, the economic arrangements of man are vile. The two

railway companies, which monopolise the export carrying trade to England, dictate the terms under which Jersey produce shall be taken to its chief market. Then the salesman, whether he is on the quay of St. Helier or at his stall in Covent Garden, dictates the prices at which the produce of the island shall be sold; and the landlord, in giving the last turn to the economic screw, leaves the cultivator of the soil squeezed of everything but a bare subsistence. In spite of all this, his labours have been prodigious.

Rents seem to average about £10 an acre, and I was pointed out one field, a very early potato site, which could command a rent of £30 an acre. Those who see a Utopia in peasant proprietorship should go to Jersey to be disillusioned, for even in this tiny island you get the owners of early or urban sites living a life of idleness on the rents accruing from land on which their grandfathers worked honestly with all their might.

I came across one farmer who told me that it cost him £16 a vergee (two and a quarter vergees to the acre) for the growth of a crop of potatoes which realised for him only £14. A loss on potatoes is serious, for, as a miller

remarked to me, "Potatoes come first in the mind of the Jersey man—even before his daily prayers." Of course, the Jersey farmer is somewhat to blame, for co-operative effort seems to be such an easy thing to accomplish on a small island. Yet none is attempted, and neighbour goes on pitting his skill against neighbour, much to the advantage of the salesman and to the loss of the farmer.

Yet in stock-keeping an element of collective enterprise was introduced into the island some time ago, and this has been of incalculable benefit to the Jersey cattle-owner. There is not that tremendous risk in stocking a farm in Jersey which besets the farmer in England: the risk of buying thoroughly bad milkers though they carry big udders and lean necks. Failure is sure to dog the footsteps of the small dairy farmer in England who begins business with two or three poor milkers bought at a sale or a market-place where nothing is known of the cows.

Now in Jersey every one attempts to get his cows entered into the Jersey Herd Book, and the absence of a cow from this book means that she has defective qualities. Bad udders, or even a weak quarter, will disqualify a cow.

Examinations take place several times in the year in the presence of several judges, and no bull is looked at without its dam. The natural result of years of selection is the maintenance of a very high standard in cows in the island and the elimination of what is so common in England—the tuberculous cow.

These pretty creatures are treated with much affection by their owners, and many of them are housed at night even in midsummer; not altogether, though, because a storm might be brewing, but because the owner is afraid that the cow might be milked by some fugitive hand during the night: a fact which indicates that simplicity is not always a striking quality in those who pursue the simple life.

So kind is the climate here that it is interesting to watch how, as the cows are being moved daily (sometimes two or three times a day) to a fresh pitch by means of a tethering pin and chain, the grass begins to grow again at one end of the field as the cows are moving towards the other end. But then the Jersey farmer does not leave everything to Nature. He treasures every drop of liquid manure which drains from the cow-stalls into a cemented tank, fills an old oil-barrel with it, mounts

that upon a lorry cart, and lets the liquid manure drip through a trough pierced with holes on to the pasture already grazed.

Sometimes, so quick is the growth of vegetation in the summer on well-favoured sites, that one potato crop is followed by another, but more often by tomatoes, roots, or seeds. Strawberries and grapes are grown to a certain extent, and when the former drop to 2d. a pound a grower told me they ceased to pay.

It is well for the stock-keeper that Nature is kind, for with rents from five to ten times greater than in England, with feeding stuffs more expensive, and the price of milk and butter no higher, the cows of the Jersey farmer would have to be exceptionally good to pay for the rent of the land on which they graze.

He sets little store by meadow hay. Why should he? for the grass is growing nearly all the year round, and large hay crops are taken from "seeds"—grass and clover. Straw, though, has to be imported and paid for at the high rate of £3 a ton, and the Jersey farmer seems to spend a good deal on artificial manures, as well as on the purchase of bran, cake, and oats, which, of course, have to be imported. It

is a significant fact that whilst Jersey exports to England 1000 cows annually, to Denmark nearly the same number, and to the United States about 500, she forbids the landing of any cattle on her shores unless they are killed first in the harbour.

When potato-digging begins, the Breton peasant comes across to earn some ready money. Sometimes he stays altogether, takes a farm, and contents himself with smaller profits than the Jerseyman is accustomed to, and thus it comes about that in spite of racial and linguistic ties the Frenchman is not beloved by the Jerseyman.

Frenchmen are said to be quickly learning the Jersey methods of cultivating potatoes, and when they return to their own country, where land is cheaper, become serious competitors in this market. Fortunately though, there is a marked tendency now towards the early potato crop of Brittany and Normandy being consigned to the increasing population of French manufacturing towns.

It is in the sister isle of Guernsey that agricultural conditions become merged into the horticultural. Indeed, in both islands it is difficult to get away, as you tread the asphalt

paths from one sea border to the other, from the feeling that you are treading the streets, lighted by lamps, of some respectable London suburb, where small nursery gardens, and the paddocks of the well-to-do who keep a Jersey cow or two, flank the roadside.

On a sunny day Guernsey, viewed from a steamer, sparkles like a huge diamond set in a sapphire sea. It is a place that approximates very closely to the cultural conditions aimed at by Prince Kropotkin in his fascinating book, *Fields, Factories, and Workshops.* To me personally, an island covered by glass-houses makes no appeal, either industrially or æsthetically. It is certainly not life in the open air; and it gives one the feeling that this is factory life under a subtle mask.

Guernsey slopes to the north and not to the south, as does Jersey, and frosts are more common here than in the sister isle; this, I suppose, is why this island took to covering itself with an armour which gave it a better chance when it entered the lists in the competitive struggle.

Of 11,357 acres of cultivated land, including Alderney and Sark, there are over 6000 acres of holdings of over one acre

under glass. Besides these, there are a number of holdings of less than one acre owned by working men who have erected their dwelling-house and their glass-house on their patch of land, not accounted for in these statistics. Whilst Jersey has only six farms of over 50 acres, Guernsey boasts of only seven. In a nursery garden of 13 acres covered with glass, it is said that as much is produced as on an English farm of 1300 acres of land. The average size of a holding seems to be about 5 acres, and the usual crops grown are grapes, tomatoes, melons, peas, and beans. Broccoli has been one of the most profitable crops in Guernsey.

But it is clear that room must be left on the island for the live-stock—they can hardly live under glass-houses; and so we find that about 6761 of the famous Guernsey cattle, 1600 horses, and over 4000 pigs are kept on the remaining 5000 acres.

When I was there I did not hear very good accounts of the financial aspects of these rows of glass-houses, for the same disadvantageous economic conditions hemmed in the Guernseyman as the Jerseyman. It is a curious reflection that an island close to the French

coast, and accessible only by steamer and rail from our large manufacturing towns, should have been chosen as a site for the erection of multitudinous glass-houses, all the material for which would have to be imported and set up on land of high economic value, and from whence the produce would have to be exported to England by monopolistic ship and railway owners. Furthermore, all the coal for heating the houses has to be imported.

But the Guernseyman has apparently the faculty for doing things more economically than the Englishman. It is the financial glory of Guernsey that it built a market-place without incurring any charge upon the rate-payer. The fascinating story of how the States of Guernsey built their Market-house by means of non-interest bearing notes might appositely be outlined here.

After the Napoleonic wars Guernsey was in a bad way financially. Smuggling had ceased to be an important home industry. Employment was scarce on the island, so much so that 500 Guernseymen left for the United States. The sea had encroached and engulfed a great piece of land through the lack of embankments and sea-walls. Added

to all this, internal trade was badly hampered by the inadequacy of its market-place and the condition of the roads, the principal thoroughfare from the country to the harbour being only seven feet wide. The States of Guernsey found it impossible to levy fresh taxes, beyond 1s. a gallon for spirituous liquors. How, then, were they to introduce pressing reforms without incurring a large debt which would be saddled upon the people of Guernsey for ever afterwards?

It was the Bailiff, Daniel de Lisle Brock, who seems to have been the inspired genius of the scheme of issuing non-interest bearing notes, and the states agreed to let the Market-house be built, as it were, by paper, or shall we say, by credit.

Let me give the Bailiff's own words, in his *Billet d'État* of 1827: "An individual with an income of £9000, who spends only half of it, wishes to build a house at the cost of £13,000. He therefore makes an arrangement with his timber-merchant, his mason, and his carpenter and others, to pay them out of his savings, so that they shall receive a part each year for five years. Can it be said that he is contracting debts? Will he not

have at the end of the five years both his house and his original income of £9000?

"The States are in precisely the same position as regards the £13,000 which they have to pay out of their income during the five years included in the same table. This sum will be paid in instalments of £2600 per annum, with as much ease as were much heavier engagements in 1826 and 1827.

"The time has passed when the public could be frightened by exaggerated reports about the debt; most complete publicity keeps every one acquainted with the real state of affairs. My greatest wish is that nothing should be hidden."

The notes issued for the Market amounted altogether to £11,296, which were all eventually cashed to bearers out of the liquor duties and the rents derived from the butchers' shops inside the Market-house. A bonfire seems to have been made every six months for the destruction of these notes. The public, that is, the contractors and the workmen who were building the Market-house, as well as the ratepayers, seem to have entered into the scheme with zest, and the States notes, instead of being taken shyly in payment of wages and

material, were grasped with the same avidity as a dealer will grasp a £5 Bank of England note.

Not only was the Market-house built in this manner, but also the embankments were thus erected to keep out the sea; old houses were pulled down, and street improvements made, and altogether 80,000 States notes were issued in twenty years.

Then came the insidious influence of the private banks, which effectually stopped the further issue of notes, to the lasting hurt of the citizens of Guernsey, who were getting all their public improvements made without paying interest. Yet so highly regarded were these notes that even to-day there are £40,000 of paper money still in circulation in the island and used as coin of the Realm.

Would that we could get our municipal debts contracted in this simple way. Then the small holder would not have long to wait for his market-places!

CHAPTER X.

JOHN BULL'S OTHER ISLAND.

THERE is no need for the Englishman in search for a rural plan of campaign to be continually running over to Denmark. I do not think that it is insular pride that makes me begin to resent the tyranny of the Dane in matters agricultural in our own country, but the knowledge that the Danish farmer, backed up by a good deal of capital, has put his hand to the plough in Sussex, in Lincolnshire, in Oxfordshire, only to look regretfully back to the country he understood better.

The Dane, in fact, has been rather overdone. He has been so often hurled at our heads as the model ploughboy to imitate, that we begin rather to dislike and even to suspect him. Indeed, a Danish friend has informed me that the Danish farmer has been seriously

disturbed by the question put bluntly by a writer of his own country: "Is the game worth the candle?" That is, the game of sending the best butter, bacon, and eggs to England, and eating instead margarine and fat Chicago bacon. As the prices of imported feeding-stuffs have steadily risen in Denmark the price obtained for the butter has fallen.

Some time ago I visited a large farm managed by Danes in an English county, and said to be run on Danish lines. Apart from the delightfully furnished office, which might have been a Cook's Tourist Office in Piccadilly, leading out into the yard, I was not very much impressed by the imported Danish methods.

The all-round, utility waggon, adaptable for all farm purposes from carrying manure to carrying two tons of hay, and the light harness, attracted my attention chiefly; but somehow the factory bell, sounded in the early morning, at the dinner hour, and in the late afternoon, seemed to strike a discordant note in the quiet English landscape. It is not as conducive to prayer as the Irish Angelus stealing over an Irish bog. The sudden tuning up of the English rustic to foreign

methods has led, as I expected, to shirking when the farmer's back is turned; and the attempt to work a farm with the labour of old soldiers and sailors has proved futile.

I would rather go to Ireland for lessons for the English, excepting always for lessons as to how land should pass from one race of landlords to another. We do not want a repetition of Land Acts which have made litigation rife in a country too prone to go to law.

Englishmen, who have obtained a picture of Irishmen from the comic characters in plays, or from the sentimental songs of Thomas Moore, are all adrift as to the qualities which go towards the making of a typical Irishman. To some, Irishmen are mystical dreamers, but to Mr. Bernard Shaw they are the most practical race on earth. Our Puritanical training, however, makes us distrust the aphorisms of wits. Yet, Sir Horace Plunkett, who possesses to a large extent the Irish genius for organisation, says that in Ireland "a bull, a boat, or a hand-loom is more readily appreciated than a professor, a leaflet, or an idea." In political organisation, of course, the Irishman gives the Englishman a long lead,

and only in Ireland could you find such a juxtaposition of interests as in the editor of the *Irish Homestead* (the official organ of the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society), Mr. George Russell, the well-known painter, and the "A.E." of Irish mystical poetry.

The recent census returns show us that whilst the population of Ireland decreased in 1881 and 1891 9·1 per cent, by 1901 it had decreased 5·2 per cent ; by 1911 it had decreased only 1·7 per cent.

One province, namely, Leinster, actually showed an increase of 499 in 1911. This check in emigration may be attributed to two causes—the re-settlement of the Irish farmer on the land that he has farmed, or on land which has previously been grazed by bullocks, and the building of cheap cottages with an acre of land attached for the Irish labourer.

The forces which have operated to keep many thousands of Irishmen from becoming citizens of the United States have been the formation of the Congested Districts Board, the County Councils, the Agricultural Organisation Society, and above all the Department of Agriculture for Ireland, which owes its

inception to Sir Horace Plunkett, who became its first vice-president.

The Department owes nothing to Westminster either in the way of its creation or in its *personnel*, which is thoroughly representative of Irish life. The difference between the Irish Department and the English Board of Agriculture is striking. One is in daily touch with the Irish farmer, whether he lives in Connemara or County Down, and the other is as aloof from the life of the tiller of the soil as the gods of Olympus from the helots of Sparta.

The Department is governed by a Council of Agriculture consisting of two members appointed by each county council (Cork being regarded as two counties and returning two members) making in all sixty-eight persons. The Department also appoints one half of this number of persons, observing in its nomination the same provincial proportion as obtained in the appointments by the popular bodies. This adds thirty-four members, and makes in all one hundred and two councillors, in addition to the president (who is the Chief Secretary) and the vice-president, who are *ex-officio* members. The Council of Agriculture is thus composed of many men who

have intimate knowledge of the hardships attending the life of the tiller of the soil—a life alien to those few officials who form the English Board of Agriculture.

In an office in Upper Merrion Street hangs a map close to the desk occupied by Professor Campbell, the assistant secretary of the Department, which gives one an informative picture of one feature of the Department's work. This map is studded with pins showing the whereabouts of the numerous stallions provided by the Department to improve the breed of horses used by the farmers. There is also another map showing the farms on which are kept the bulls and boars sent out to improve the breeds of Irish cattle and pigs; but so thick are these pins upon the ground, so to speak, that little can be seen of the physiography of the Emerald Isle.

When I expressed my admiration of this map to Mr. Campbell, he said to me, "But remember you have come to the worst country in the world to see successful holdings. Out of 600,000 small holdings there are 200,000 scheduled as uneconomic, of which the occupiers are just beginning to be lifted out

of a life of wretchedness by what our critics are pleased to call a spoon-fed policy." This statement, however, only added interest to my visit, for 75 per cent of the population of Ireland are dependent on what they can wrest from the soil for their daily bread, and of these 75 per cent occupy holdings of less than 30 acres in extent.

Here indeed we are witnessing the making of a new Ireland out of conditions worse than those which obtained in Denmark before she inaugurated her bold agricultural state policy. Out of the seething pot of Irish politics has emerged a new life.

Just outside Dublin stands a factory for the polishing of the human machinery which forms the refining element in the agricultural revolution. This is the Glasnevin Agricultural College, where a young Irish farmer can, at a cost of £15, obtain for a term of eleven months a practical education in agriculture, horticulture, and dairy farming; and this small sum not only includes tuition, but board and lodging, as well as laundry and medical attendance.

In England, even with grants from county councils, the fees of one of our agricultural

colleges are rarely less than £60 or £70, rising to £120 or more. There is, indeed, no agricultural college in England where the fees are low enough, as in Denmark and Ireland, to admit without a scholarship the son of the poor farmer or the small holder, let alone the agricultural labourer.

The difference between the mental alertness of the Irish jarvie and the London cabman was brought home to me as I drove on an outside car to Glasnevin College. The jarvie discussed the merits or demerits of the two vice-presidents of the Board of Agriculture, and especially as to their knowledge of horses, in a way that one would never dream of hearing from the lips of a London cabman. Moreover, during the time he waited for me outside the College, he had thoroughly mastered the contents of an article of mine which had just appeared in a magazine that I had left lying on the seat of the car.

This incident was to me illuminating, as it immediately indicated the world of difference I should find between the Connaught peasant and the Sussex labourer. Among the bogs of Mayo you will find tattered peasants fervently discussing albuminoid ratios, and percentages

of soluble phosphates, with the zeal displayed when discussing the acts of piety of St. Patrick.

At the College, not only are there sons of small farmers training to become better agriculturists than their fathers, but also the future agricultural instructors who shall in due course work under the Department or the County Council. It was charming, too, to find a retired army officer taking lessons in modern agriculture, so that he may become a landowner with some knowledge of the qualities of land, and impart this acquired knowledge to his tenants in return for taking rents from them.

At Glasnevin are bred many of those fine young pedigree bulls which are placed in distant parts of the country for the improvement of Irish cattle. I saw one worth quite £300 on its way to Limerick. It will be kept there by some small farmer who will be given £15 for its keep, and he will have to let any farmer in his district have the use of it for the sum of 1s. In England the customary service fee for a third-class bull is 5s. It is not necessary to go over to Ireland to witness the marked improvement in Irish cattle. In most of our

large English markets and fairs Irish cattle have in the past been treated with scorn. They are now sought after eagerly by English farmers. We import from Ireland twice the number of cattle that we do from all other colonies put together.

Bred here too are those large white Yorkshire boars, which are eliminating the strain of undersized mottled pigs met with so frequently in the west country. "The gintleman who pays the rint" is now better coated and more imposing in appearance than he used to be.

A boar will be sent to a farmer and kept by him for a sum varying from £3 to £5 a year, and the sows in the district are served for the fee of 1s.

Perhaps the most striking difference in Irish live-stock is in the ass, which is the poor man's horse, especially in the West. By importing donkeys from Spain, the Irish ass now met with in many parts of the country is a much more serviceable animal than the small native-bred one.

Trap-nesting too is in vogue in Glasnevin, and by means of this ingenious contrivance strains of good laying hens are bred and sent into the country to propagate their breed.

The plan adopted for establishing poultry stations is to forward to some congested district thirty hens with three cocks of a laying strain to a farmer and his wife, and a gratuity of £5 a year is awarded to the farmer, who in return is obliged to sell at least seventy sittings to the local farmers at 1s. a sitting.

I notice in looking at the agricultural returns of Great Britain that Ireland now exports to England eggs realising a larger sum of money than either Russia or Denmark. An extract from the last annual Report of the Kings County Committee of Agriculture shows how Irishmen are beginning to be alive to the importance of co-operative marketing of poultry as well as of butter. "The poultry industry is looked down upon," runs the Report; "yet from Garrycastle district alone 800 boxes of fattened poultry were dispatched to the London market during the last three years. The average price received was 7s. 9d. per pair. Deducting 1s. 8d. as the cost of fattening each pair and the cost of carriage to London, the net average receipt per pair was 6s. 1d. The average price of chickens in the district during the same period was 3s. 3d., a clear gain of 2s. 10d. on 2400 pairs, which

meant increased money in circulation in the district to the extent of £340. £340 of profit in a brief period in one district as a result of one scheme's co-operation! At the present time it needs only organisation and the consequent solving of the transit question to multiply ten times over the profits derived from the poultry industry."

Mr. T. W. Russell, the Vice-President of the Department, announced at the Poultry Conference held in Dublin in 1911 that there had been an increase of precisely one million sterling since 1904 in eggs and poultry in Ireland: an increase attributed to the adoption of co-operation.

Fruit culture is taught on the latest scientific principles at Glasnevin, and now there are over a hundred fruit stations established in Ireland, where fruit culture is still in its infancy. One of the wisest things, perhaps, that the college authorities have done is to lay out the beautifully kept fruit plantation at Glasnevin, for it appears to me that the Irish farmer knows far less about scientific fruit-growing than of the growing of farm crops and the rearing of live-stock. The English farmer is, as we know, traditionally a bad gardener,

but he, at any rate, does not expect to see the sow rooting up his kitchen garden or his hens scratching up the flower garden, which proceedings the Irish farmer appears to regard with the utmost complacency. It forms, indeed, an ordinary operation in garden tillage.

It is the universal use of the plough wherein lies the economic hope of this pastoral country. The same instinct which impelled the English labourer to smash up agricultural machinery in the early part of the nineteenth century, drove the Irish peasant to clear cattle off the land wherever he felt blue smoke from his own hearth should be seen arising.

Yet while Hodge is receptive of only one idea at a time, and is swayed by but one sentiment, Patrick seems filled with warring contradictions. "They are the merriest people and the saddest, the most turbulent and the most docile, the most talented and the most unproductive, the most practical and the most visionary, the most devout and the most pagan," wrote the late Harold Frederic in his splendid work of fiction, *Illumination*.

I arrived in Roscommon just after a cattle-

drive, and whilst "the merriest people" painted in the night a certain large grazier's cattle blue, and drove them many miles across the bogs, "the saddest" wailed over lost days spent in unproductive labour. There is that inherent love of sport in the Irishman which will make him deny himself bread in order to paint a great grazier's cows blue, and I am convinced that it is the exercise of this sporting instinct in practical matters which makes the Irishman at times a bad business man.

A great deal of farming in years gone by consisted in the sterile game of passing cattle and pigs from one hand to another, each farmer hoping to make something out of the "deal"; and it is plain even to those who are ignorant of political economy that this kind of unproductive labour must keep the farmers, as a class, poor. When the creameries were first instituted, and contracts had to be made with English butter merchants, the same sporting instinct drove the creamery secretaries to try to drive bargains with stolid, phlegmatic British butter merchants. The Irish farmer thought that by starting to ask an exorbitant price, as they had traditionally done with their cattle, they could always come down; but unfortunately

for the creameries, the coming down invariably resulted in a brief but conclusive negative on the part of the English butter merchant, who had no time for commercial pleasantries.

The bartering away of a daughter for a pig, a calf, or a heifer, with the priest as auctioneer in the matrimonial market, throws, I admit, an ugly side-light on the practical side of the Irish character, but my own experience leads me to have only pleasant feelings toward the unfailing courtesy and generosity of the Irish people.

In England, especially around the district dominated by a large and wealthy country house, or near towns where the rich merchant sets up his mansion, one can hardly get a gate opened or be directed on one's way without giving the looked for "tip" of the price of a "pint." Now I travelled over the wildest and poorest parts of Ireland with my camera, and I was warned by an Irish doctor not to insult the Irish peasant, however poor he might be, with a tip for any service performed; and on the only occasion that I did insult an Irish peasant—which, by the way, was at the point nearest to England—Waterford—I received a well-deserved rebuke.

The peasant, with a tattered coat and a battered-in hat, was driving a herd of swine for transportation to England. On the quay at Waterford I asked him to oblige me by driving the swine out of the shade into the sunshine. This took a good deal of manœuvring on his part, and after I had taken the photograph and shut up the camera, I ran after him and cried out, "Here's a drink." He turned round to me, and waving his stick shouted, "No! no! can't we do that one for the other, now?" In this graceful manner did he bring me into line with the great brotherhood of those who toil.

Their desire to play being nearly always stronger than their desire to make money was borne in upon me as I stood in the market-place of Castlereagh photographing a big cross-bred Spanish-Irish donkey with a little donkey of the old Irish breed by its side. An amphitheatre was immediately formed, and the entire business of the day was suspended whilst witticisms were passed between the owners of the donkeys and the crowd.

I must, however, draw a distinction between the Irish peasant and the Irish bourgeoisie. The ugly side of commercialism is strongly

developed in the prosperous country shopkeeper and publican, who, as the "gombeen-man" or money-lender, has been responsible for as much misery amongst the Irish people as the landlord class, and unfortunately for local government in Ireland this creature is still to be met with on the seats of the mighty. He is far too often the poor law guardian, and so exercises publicly as well as privately his tyrannical sway; and if the Congested Districts Board and the Department for Agriculture had been called into being for no other reason than to strike at the domination of this despot, that alone would have justified their existence.

The Credit Banks, formed by the State Departments, are, I am thankful to say, now reducing the power of the gombeen-man. Instead of paying anything from 60 per cent upwards (and the cost of several drinks) for money borrowed to carry over a bad season, or with which to buy a cow or a pig, the Irish farmer can now borrow it at 3 per cent.[1] The gombeen-man has generally

[1] This low rate of interest unfortunately is only charged in Congested Districts when the transaction takes place without the intermediary of a Joint-Stock Bank.

obtained his security by getting a deed on the land, and it is when failing to pay the interest that many thousands of poor Irish farmers have let their holdings slip into the hands of the money-lender. I asked a nationalist who was driving me round the Congested Districts of Roscommon how it was that Captain Moonlight had never shot the gombeen-man as he has the landlord or his agent. "It is because," came the response, "the farmers think the gombeen-man has done them a favour, however much he may rob them, whilst the landlord has never done anything for them," which I think again illustrates Harold Frederic's dictum that they are "the most turbulent" and yet "the most docile people."

Though the gombeen-man as petty usurer had had his wings clipped by Credit Banks, Mr. George W. Russell struck a note of warning in the *Irish Review* for June 1911 as to the probable rise over the border of a race of small proprietors. "I know," says Mr. Russell, "Socialism is the logical solution of all difficulties, but there is no use talking about it in Ireland. When the State decided on turning tenants into proprietors it set up

a barrier against socialism which will last, I fancy, for a couple of hundred years yet, for an Irish farmer would pour down boiling lead on the emissaries of the State who tried to nationalise his land, the land he sweated sixty years to pay for. There is no fear of socialism in Ireland. There are other and real dangers. There is the danger that without a complete reorganisation of the business methods in rural Ireland it will step back gradually into the old order with a new class of landlords. There is the fear that Michael Mulligan, gombeen-man, and his class will begin gradually to absorb the farmers as their tied customers, and so create a new aristocracy. Indeed, they are already doing this. The old aristocracy swaggered royally to the devil. They borrowed money at 60 per cent to ruin themselves. The new aristocracy, whose coming I dread, have been accustomed to lend money at 60 per cent to ruin others. I prefer the former type, though I hope no one will accuse me of unduly exalting it. I believe the alternative habit is the more dangerous of the two, and is less easily got rid of as a family tradition."

In a congested district such as we find near

Castlereagh we get "the most practical and the most visionary of races" working out its destiny by the aid of agricultural science and organisation. The work of thinning out a congested district is work in which comedy and tragedy are closely interwoven; it is a process intensely Irish.

Where mud cabins are huddled together is a farm which might not total more than six or even four acres, consisting perhaps of a score of isolated patches of land — recording, no doubt, the passage of the greedy incisors of the gombeen-man. From this wretched holding, the nursery of a fiery patriotism, the visionary in the old-time farmer, who wishes to stay where his clan is, has to be overcome by an appeal to his sense of the practical. The surveyor will have to argue with him that it is better for him to lose his old mud cabin not worth £30, in order to inhabit a new cottage worth £150 or £200 built on the thirty-acre holding ready for him some miles away on land which was recently grazed by the bullock and the sheep. And when once the migrant has been persuaded to leave his wretched cabin and his uneconomic farm of isolated patches of land, to take up abode in a new

settlement, he is not left there to starve as we in England practically invite the English small holder to do. Immediately, a loan from the Credit Bank is granted him at $2\frac{1}{2}$ or 3 per cent, the security for which, even in the Wild West of Ireland, being taken on two personal securities, is indicative that finance based on the character of the untutored Irish peasant is regarded as a greater gilt-edge security than real property.

The payment for his new thirty-acre holding, including the cost of his cottage, covers a term of sixty-six years at $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent interest, which amounts to an annual payment on the average of £17 or £18 a year. That is, he buys a house and thirty acres by the annual payment of a sum less than half the English small holder pays for rent.

Of course the land is very poor; indeed many an English small holder would scorn to till land covered with stones so large and plentiful that, as Mr. George Birmingham says in one of his novels, "It looks as though when the Creator was riddling out the earth over Europe He used to empty out the sieve over Connaught." These stones account for the long, narrow spades with which

the farmer clears the land before he can begin to plant his potatoes. The stones are put into heaps as one sees farmers in England pile up the swedes in a field of roots. Then they are carted away in a donkey-cart and used for erecting field-walls.

The agricultural instructors, who spend their whole time in teaching the farmers modern methods, soon get them to quit using the spade for making their lazy beds in which to plant potatoes, and induce them instead to plough, drawing drills for the tuber.

Very often the little patch of oats cultivated on the old uneconomic holding, the one crop which brings in ready money, has been cultivated solely by the spade.

It is obvious that a poor peasant, though able to borrow money from the Credit Bank, would not find it profitable to keep two working horses on thirty acres, nor to buy the larger and more expensive of the agricultural implements. He can, though, purchase one or two implements and keep one horse, and so the difficulty is overcome by neighbours co-operating in the ploughing or drilling in of seed: the two single horses of two settlers being harnessed together as a ploughing team, and

in this way the small farmer works his land as economically as the large farmer.

I think, however, the Department of the Congested Districts Board, which has large powers extending even to the equipment of small holders with live-stock, should form a depôt for the storing of the larger up-to-date agricultural machines, to be let out to farmers at a fixed charge, high enough to save the taxpayer from any burden. Implements would then be kept with greater care and used more methodically.

To find the exact sum needed for the equipment of a thirty-acre farm, I got this list from one farmer showing the payments made by him amounted altogether to £200.

Cost of Equipment and Stock

3 Cows at £15	£45	0	0
6 Two-year-old Cattle	60	0	0
6 Calves	7	10	0
4 Store Pigs	4	0	0
12 Hens	1	16	0
Cart	6	10	0
Donkey-cart and Harness	6	0	0
Harrow	2	0	0
Drill	2	0	0
Carry forward	£134	16	0

Brought forward . .	£134	16	0
Working Horse . . .	16	0	0
10 Ewes	17	10	0
Sow in Pig	5	0	0
Donkey	1	10	0
5 Sittings of Eggs . .	0	5	0
Harness	3	0	0
Plough	4	0	0
Roller	4	0	0
Manure, Seeds, etc. . .	13	19	0
	£200	0	0

The importance of tillage in the regeneration of Ireland cannot be over-emphasised. I will not dwell on the question of land ownership, for enough has been written on that point already by hundreds of politicians. It is sufficient for the moment that we are committed to a certain land policy, which forfend we should ever imitate in England! I have been repeatedly told that every Irishman, as well as every Englishman, has a strong sentimental feeling about owning a patch of his native land; but when it comes to assuring to the tiller of the soil security of tenure, I find that the sentiment of the Irishman is assimilated to that of most Englishmen: with fixity of tenure at a fair rent he remains content.

What every migrant wants is not so much a parchment deed entitling him to the sole ownership of a holding as to know the extent of his annual payment. What, however, we English do envy in the Irish is the organising capacity of their State officials, the enthusiasm and humanity of their instructors and surveyors, and the assistance given by the State in the equipment and stocking of holdings, and the domestic and agricultural education afforded to peasant girls. The spoon-fed policy, indeed, has been as successful in producing in Ireland a new race of independent-minded, alert, scientifically trained agriculturists, as a similar policy pursued in Denmark and Hungary has produced splendid results in those countries.

Whilst there were large graziers, in place of small farmers tilling the soil; whilst there were small farmers haggling with one another over their cattle and pigs, instead of labouring productively; whilst there was an entire lack of co-operative production and marketing, Ireland was doomed to become a depopulated island.

The two problems which absorbed the attention of Irish agricultural reformers

were: (1) how the farmer was to make better use of his land; and (2), when that was accomplished, how he was to market the produce to better advantage.

When the history of the New Ireland comes to be written, it will be shown how the solution of the second of these problems took precedence over the first. To stimulate the Irish farmer to greater industrial activity it was natural enough that he should be shown how to market to advantage what he had already produced before he could be asked to produce more. That is a lesson which rural educationists, and all who are eager to revive country life, have yet to learn in England.

The Honourable Horace Plunkett, a poor speaker, a member of the suspected landlord class, the brother of a lord, and a Protestant, first took the field in 1889. What he asked the Irish farmers to do was to help themselves by forming agricultural co-operative societies. Regarded with suspicion by priests and nationalist leaders alike, Mr. Plunkett (now Sir Horace) seemed to have set himself an almost superhuman task. Sometimes his meeting consisted solely of the village schoolmaster and the parish priest—impelled by curiosity—and

perhaps a travelling companion. Often his meeting took place in an open field with the sky for a roof. Fifty meetings were held before a single society was formed. And then, all of a sudden, in that dramatic way peculiar to Ireland, the fiat went forth that the proposals he made were certainly practical. The business side of the Irishman became convinced, but what helped Sir Horace Plunkett more than anything else was that he roused the social instinct of the clan-loving Celt, making him respond to the feeling that he was doing something for the good of his clan, or the race, as well as something for his own individual good. And this is where we Englishmen are woefully lacking. We are self-destructively individualistic.

The more broad-minded priests began to see that their parishioners might be lifted out of their slough of poverty, and once the priest really took up the co-operative agricultural organisation—and none is more active to-day than Father Tom Finlay, S.J.—its success was assured.

After Mass the parish priest would announce to his flock that a meeting would be held. At the same time he would strongly

urge, and even order, the men to attend ; and he himself would frequently take the chair.

"Where are ye going, Michael O'Flanagan?" the priest would roar to a retreating form at the close of the service. "Just ye come back and listen to the speaker." And Michael O'Flanagan would remain to become enrolled as a member of the I.A.O.S.

The immediate practical outcome of this agitation was the formation of co-operative creameries, amid the rich meadow-lands of County Limerick.

The formation of these co-operative creameries effected a revolution in the butter trade of Ireland and England, and to-day the creameries realise for the farmers as high a price—that is, a fraction over 11d. a pound—as the creameries in Denmark do for her farmers.

Stock-raising has always been a favourite pursuit of the Irish farmer from time immemorial, and whilst in England the increase of dairying has led, unfortunately, to the laying down of more arable land to grass, in Ireland, thanks to the efforts of the agricultural instructors, land once grazed by bullocks is now growing corn and potatoes.

Irish dairy farmers are beginning to see that the more they use the plough the more cows they can keep on their holdings, and the greater will be their cash returns.

Yet however successful the appeal to self-help might be in the more prosperous farming districts, in the wretchedly poor districts of Connaught and Kerry it was like appealing to the stones which littered their poor fields.

To the rescue of these poorer districts came Mr. Arthur Balfour in 1893 by the formation of the Congested Districts Board, which Mr. Michael Davitt described as a Board "with large powers for the application of State Socialism." Another person, of a less reputable type, has been heard to describe the officers of this Board as "a lot of spalpeens who would never rest till every blessed cock in the country had laid an egg before its breakfast in the morning." This ironical utterance came from the lips of a gombeen-man who began to feel that his lucrative business of adding field to field, so trenchantly denounced by Isaiah, was tottering to its fall.

But Sir Horace Plunkett was not one to be content with the limiting of the gospel of Self-help to certain districts. What was good

for Connaught was good also for Leinster, and Ulster, and Munster; and his crowning success in agricultural organisation on a national scale was the formation of the Department of the Board of Agriculture for Ireland. It was surely a great achievement for a race crushed by a century of bitter political disappointment to begin to reorganise a depressed industry by means of a State Department.

Though the newly formed Department took no part in the trading side of the co-operative creameries, leaving that to the local branch of the I.A.O.S., it helped them by what might be termed its moral support. The Department would assist the local body of farmers with architect's plans of creameries, give advice as to the purchase of materials, and by an arrangement with the Joint Stock Banks the local farmers could, backed by the State, borrow money for the building of the creameries, sometimes costing over £1000 at 4 or 5 per cent interest. Here again it is the personal element that forms the basis of the security.

The Department too would send inspectors, differing from the ordinary factory inspector,

in that they would give advice and prizes for the best-kept creameries and the best butter. It also suggested rules and methods as to the ratio of payment to the farmers according to the butter-fat.

The usual plan adopted by a number of farmers in a dairying locality is for each cow-keeper to take shares according to the number of cows he possesses—usually £1 per cow. But these shares are rarely fully paid up. Instead, the actual cash is obtained from the Joint Stock Bank, sufficient to erect the building and buy the necessary expensive machinery. Mistakes were made at first, as when the creameries bought the cream direct from the farmers, with the disastrous consequence of the manufacture of inferior butter, for cream which has been standing in an Irish kitchen in different degrees of temperature and of culinary smells (to say nothing of the pig) is not in ideal condition for the manufacture of butter.

Now, however, the milk is taken from the churn direct from the cowshed in a donkey-cart driven by the farmer's wife or daughter. She will drive up at one end of the creamery, where the milk-churn is taken on to the

receiving platform; the milk is then turned into a tank, weighed and strained, and passed direct into the separating tanks. The woman will then draw away her donkey-cart to make room for the next one in the order of procession, and the separated milk will be returned to her through an outlet in the creamery wall direct into her cart. This she takes away for her pigs and calves. About once a fortnight an official of the creamery will test the milk from each farmer's cows in order to arrive at an average of the percentage of butter-fat. Then at the end of the month, the cheque will be paid to each farmer according to the amount of butter-fat he has sent in, and the market price obtained for the butter.

A further step, in my opinion, should be taken by the Department, in exercising some control over the quality of the butter, that is, to standardise it as is done by the State of the Australian Commonwealth, and a further step in voluntary organisation might be attempted by the Irish creameries (such as has been brought about by the English poultry societies) in linking themselves together to avoid competing against each other in the same markets.

Butter is not the only product of the creameries. Eggs are also marketed, and a good deal of cream is sent even as far afield as London, though the dairy companies take good care not to inform their customers that the cream they are buying has come *by steamer as well as by rail.*

Milk too is sent to London in the winter, and if the dairy industry were thoroughly organised, I am informed that the whole of Liverpool and Manchester could be supplied daily with milk from Ireland.

In spite of the comparative success of the Agricultural Organisation Societies, education has still to do its work, even among the more prosperous of the dairy farmers in the south. It might be more effectively shown how farmers could keep a larger number of cows on their small holdings.

Many farmers had to be thoroughly convinced that it would pay them to plough grassland before they would put their hand to the modern plough. It was all very well, they said, to talk about ploughing the poor, hungry soil of Connaught, but when it came to the rich pastures of Limerick it was another thing. They were probably right had they kept to

their antiquated methods in growing potatoes and cereals, but the agricultural instructor showed them the new methods—methods in which native wit played its part in convincing the Gael.

Finding that the farmers in County Limerick were using an antiquated form of plough, the instructor went to a well-known blacksmith and showed him how to make a plough suitable for their land. Then he attended a meeting of farmers and exhorted them thus: "Men of Limerick, many a dark deed has been done by night in poor old Oireland, now I want you to do another dark deed this very night. I want you to collect together all the old ploughs you can lay hold of and throw them into the Shannon."

When the new plough was made, it is said that the blacksmith grew so enthusiastic over it that he ploughed with it from morning until night, forgetting to go home for his midday meal! Though I will not vouch for the veracity of this part of the story, for it might bring me into trouble with the S.P.C.A., I can say it is true that he could not cope with the orders given to him by the farmers for the newly modelled plough.

The farmer had yet to be convinced as to the advantages of tillage over growing grass. Even though an efficient implement had been made for him, a practical and sceptical, though a visionary race, wanted something more materialistic than lectures to show that tillage paid better than growing grass for hay or pasture.

In England we have one experimental agricultural station — Rothamsted—of which we are justly proud—one ; and yet agriculture is still our greatest industry ! In Ireland an experimental plot may be found in every district. If the instructor cannot persuade the farmers in his district to try tillage in the place of growing grass, or what is more common, to try his methods of scientific tillage in the production of potatoes, oats, and roots, instead of antiquated ones, he will say to the most sceptical of the farmers : "Let me have a rood of your land and I will give you the seed potatoes, the superphosphates, or other fertilisers, then you must follow my instructions, do the work, and compare the crop from this rood with the crops you obtain by following your own methods."

These valuable practical experiments, now

published for all the world to read, have shown the Irish farmer that his old-fashioned Champion potato is out-dated, giving place to Up-to-dates, Factors, and Ninetyfolds; that by sprouting potatoes in boxes before planting he can get an extra yield of 5 tons per Irish acre, and by following the new methods of tillage, manuring, etc., he can obtain altogether an increased yield of 11 tons per Irish acre. Furthermore, it has been shown that by growing potatoes, oats, mangolds, and turnips, the increased profit per Irish acre of tillage over grass amounts to £9 : 18 : 9.

The dairy instructors have added their quota to the prosperity of the country by showing that the Irish farmer annually loses money by sending over to England his heifers as twinters or yearlings, instead of calving them down, making butter from the cream, and feeding pigs or calves with the separated milk, and producing their own bacon.

One of the most interesting features in the revival of rural life in Ireland is the practical education of the girls, who are being trained to become efficient housewives and mothers, —to become, in fact, helpmates to their husbands. This educational movement, making

for the economic emancipation of women, curiously enough is carried on in remote places islanded by bogs, where the teachers are nuns, presided over by a Mother Superior. Truly, the old order changeth, giving place to the new.

I visited a large mansion once owned by an Irish peer and now occupied at night by nuns, and by day by peasant girls who tramp several miles across the bogs to learn pig-keeping, gardening, bee-keeping, dairying; and in-doors, washing and ironing, cooking, cleaning, and the decoration of the home. Every day these good and gracious ladies, these high priestesses of Demeter, are teaching girls from fourteen years of age upwards not to spend their lives merely in making Irish lace, or in parasitic labour, but to become efficient housewives and mothers.

The importance of educating Irish lasses in domestic economy can hardly be over-estimated, for Irish cooking has become a byword. But apart from the education of the Irish peasant girl as a housewife, her education as a gardener and a decorative artist is one which is likely to produce tidier, if not happier, homesteads. The Irish farmer is a

much worse gardener than even the English farmer, and it is the woman rather than the man to whom the æsthetic appeal can be more readily made.

It was difficult first of all for surveyors and instructors to break the tradition of letting the sow and the poultry take possession of the doorstep and the garden. Such a thing as a creeper, or a shrub, or a fruit-tree for decorative as well as utilitarian purposes was unknown until the instructor began to offer plants at cost prices at the various horticultural stations, and at first, even to give them away.

Then, on a new settlement, when Mrs. Pat O'Flaherty saw Mrs. Tim Murphy had a prettier-looking garden and house-front than hers, the spirit of emulation awoke in Mrs. Pat, and she too asked for shrubs and fruit-trees at cost price; and the young wife having a taste for gardening, cultivated at some council school, keeps the destructive sow within its own demesne.

The other influence besides that of agricultural education and organisation responsible for the stemming the tide of emigration, has been that of building labourers' cottages with

(1.) The old Mud Cabin, replaced by the new Cottage.

(2.) Typical Labourer's Cottage, with an acre of ground, let for one shilling a week (*Co. Limerick*).

half an acre or an acre of land attached. From 40,000 to 50,000 of these cottages have been let at rents varying from as low as 7d. to 2s. 8d. per week, but taking them on the average we might say that in Ireland a rural proletarian can get a five-roomed cottage with an acre of land for 1s. a week. This low rent is, of course, an uneconomic one, but in order to prevent the labourer from emigrating to America the Irish farmer and landowner are willing to add a subsidy from the rates to supplement the grant from Imperial taxes.

Wages are low in Ireland where there is little difference between the economic position of the labourer and the farmer. They do not run to more than 1s. 6d. per day. The farmer does not suggest paying higher wages in order that the labourer should be able to pay an economic rent, because the farmer is probably as poor as the labourer, and in some cases poorer. Shocking as this may appear to orthodox political economists, it should be remembered that the same principle has operated in England ever since the passing of the Agricultural Rates Act; for in England the village tradesman and the country doctor

have to make up the moiety from which farmers and landowners are exempted on agricultural land.

At any rate, we have to admit that unsound political economy has achieved an undoubted success, whilst in our own island the Housing Acts applied to rural districts and based on "sound economics" have made no headway at all,—have been, indeed, a pathetic failure.

One criticism I may make against Irish cottages, whether these be the new homes of migrants or of labourers, is their appalling ugliness. Beauty should be the handmaid of Simplicity, but in Ireland Simplicity serves at the altar of Ugliness. The Celtic renaissance in literature and in art might surely express itself more fittingly with the stones of the field.

To sum up, I might venture to quote the words I wrote in the *London Magazine*, June 1910. "An economic revolution is daily taking place in Ireland. So peacefully is it working to its predestined goal that many people are unaware of the wonderful work it is doing in the creation of a new Ireland. At the bottom of that seething turmoil, known as the Home Rule agitation, always lay this basic factor—

earth hunger — the primeval desire of the peasant to possess his native land. The peasant is now possessing the land, and taking a larger share in its government. In the place of the constable we see the agricultural instructor at work. In the place of the exacting gombeen-man who preyed upon the poverty of the people we have a Government acting as benevolent banker. In the place of competitive strife we have agricultural co-operation. In the place of the wretched old mud cabin we see now clean five-roomed cottages. In those silent places amid grassy plains, where yesterday only bullocks were to be seen, we now hear the laughter of children at the doors of smiling homesteads. This is what I saw in Ireland with a mind, I hope, unbiassed by bitterness or sectarian prejudice."

Three-fourths of the gaols are now empty, and one at Enniskillen has been converted into a school. Yet there is a tragic note which must be sounded in the midst of the birth of a new life in Ireland. Even to-day, with all this extra agricultural activity in the Emerald Isle, thousands of poor Irish farmers in the west migrate to England and Scotland every year during the potato, the hay, and the corn

harvest to earn the much-needed ready money to pay for food and fuel during the winter months. That is to say, they leave their little farms at the very time that their labour is most needed, the time for harvesting their own potatoes, their own hay, and their own oats. Whilst this denudation of labourers proceeds on Irish farms, agriculture must always remain at a low ebb.

CHAPTER XI.

THE WORKSHOP PLUS THE LAND.

THERE is no doubt that whilst in the industrial centres of England the introduction of machinery has had the effect of displacing many hands, it has given employment to many more. That is because industrial England has been the workshop of the world. On the other hand, I think we may safely say that the introduction of agricultural machinery has had the effect on farm lands of eventually reducing the number of hands employed. Even the making of the new agricultural machinery has not employed many extra English hands in the towns, for a great deal of it is made in America, where they seem to have the art of making the machines light, and at the same time durable.

When I was visiting Ireland I met an

American bagman, who informed me that he had been one of the greatest agricultural instructors Ireland ever had. I was talking to one of the Department of Agricultural County instructors at the time, and I naturally looked at my informant with a note of interrogation on my eyebrow.

"I introduce new machinery to the farmers," he informed me in his expansive way, "and teach them how to use it, and, as an Irish farmer once said to me, 'P—— of Belfast can take the fat off my horses' backs with his heavy tackle, but what I want to know is, can he put it on again?' Now, with *my* stuff a horse can gallop, etc."

The farmer does not use his agricultural machinery as a manufacturer uses a new machine in a town, to produce a greater quantity in a shorter time, but for the purpose of keeping down his wages bill. Machinery has hardly increased the productivity of the farm, and it has been used almost entirely for extensive rather than for intensive culture.

It is well known that the best of our agricultural machinery is exported to our colonies and foreign countries. I have a friend, for instance, who farms 1200 acres of more or less

unreclaimed land in New Zealand. On his farm he keeps a herd of 120 cows and has a Lawrence-Kennedy milking machine with which to milk them, and yet, I suppose, in the very heart of the English county, where this machine is actually made, few farmers are using it.

Is it not through the lack of capital rather than the low price of corn that the English farmer still uses machines of an out-of-date pattern? For it must be remembered that when the English farmer had to face the competition of the new world where wheat could be produced on virgin soil without manure, rented at prairie value, rents at home began to rise in 1852-53 and tended upwards until 1880, and even for several years after this our farmers continued to take farms at high and even impossible rents.

During this long period of thirty years, the surplus wealth derived from farm lands went towards making capital, not for the farmer, but for the landlord. Now, with reduced rents, it is the owner of agricultural land who is making slow financial progress, whilst it is the farmer with the aid of newly invented, labour-saving machinery who has the opportunity

to improve his position. The labourer remains very much where he was before; indeed he is probably worse off, for while wages have increased 12 per cent since 1895, prices have risen 18 per cent, and rents of cottages have steadily risen at a still higher ratio.

Instinctively, the English agricultural labourer, as would all of us were we in his place, regarded the agricultural machine as his enemy. Used as his master, as a kind of inhuman fiend which rendered the labourer's sinewy arms atrophied, and which robbed his wife and family of food, the agricultural machine became undoubtedly the labourer's enemy. But used as his servant, it would immediately become his friend, lessen the severity of his toil, shorten his hours of labour, and bring extra food to his wife and family. The thing which ought to have been done by a wise Government was never done. The labourer was never given the opportunity to own the machine individually or collectively, and in consequence he became a dangerous disturber of the peace.

In Ireland this lesson has been learnt, and in Wicklow, Kilkenny, and Waterford you will see large threshing machines worth up-

wards of £700 owned collectively by poor Irish peasants and worked by them co-operatively.

With the creation of Small Holding Co-operative Societies, and large farmers' Agricultural Societies, which are now steadily on the increase, we hope to see a better class of agricultural machinery used on our small and large farms. But without co-operative effort I fear we shall witness with the extension of small holdings a retrograde movement taking us back again to the sickle and the flail.

There are many who would not regret this. I was once lecturing before a society composed of middle-class and working people who had made somewhat a fetish of the Simple Life. I was advocating the collective use of the milking machine, Canadian water-mills, and manure-carriers and distributers for the stock-keeping small holder. As I have had to clean out my cowsheds many a time, as well as milk the cows, and also to draw water from distant ponds, I had a somewhat intimate knowledge of unclean hard drudgery.

Thereupon a lady in the audience, expensively gowned by Liberty, vehemently protested against my "pernicious doctrine" and spoke of the beauty of a pastoral life, in

which the hand-milking of cows by charming milkmaids and the dancing round the Maypole were romantically coloured. She even admired the life led by the German and Breton peasant woman, and regarded the loading of a dung-cart on a wet day by a peasant woman as an idyllic occupation.

"How would you like," I asked her in reply, "to place your fair cheek against the dirty flank of a cow with its knotted, damp tail flicking round your neck for ten minutes or a quarter of an hour? The first bar of a Morris song would surely die upon your lips. But if our dairymaids and cowmen had the milk machine going they would not only feel inclined, but possess the opportunity as well, to dance round the Maypole."

It is for all forms of brutalising hand labour that I would introduce the machine. Of course I do not regard milking as a form of brutalising labour when the cow rises fragrant from its dew bath on a misty May morning. Then milking is quite a pleasant occupation. But in winter it is not quite so pleasant, when the cow sleeps in the byre and has to be thoroughly cleaned before milking begins.

For the shifting of heavy masses of farm-

yard manure; the distributing of liquid and artificial manures; the building up of high stacks from the low waggon in place of the elevator, and all such dehumanising work, I would introduce the machine. If agricultural machinery were used too for the breaking up and cultivation of those rough tracts of grass land which feed nothing but rabbits, we should achieve a distinct national gain. But in the interests of the revival of country life, in the interests of raising the standard of national physique, and of bringing joy into the lives of our workers, I am strongly in favour of a movement which brings handicraft into play, a movement which I might sum up in the phrase "the workshop, plus the land."

We have already an urban exodus which might be described as the Garden City movement, where the town workman is taken out from the city to live close to the factory erected in the country. This migration began as far back as Jefferies' time. In his *Wild Life in a Southern County* he writes: "It is true that of late years many manufacturers have found it profitable to remove their workshops from the city into the country,

the rent of premises being so much less, water to be got by sinking a well, and wages a little cheaper. They retain a shop and office in the city, but have the work done miles away. But even this is distinctively associated with centralisation. The workmen are merely paid human machines; they do not labour for their own hands, in their own little shops at home."

This kind of thing is still the factory system, though possibly placed under better conditions. From an intelligent mechanic or a creative artist, and one made in the image of God, man sinks to a mere machine-minder, and in the process he loses the dignity of manhood.

The unrest among the working classes in the towns is largely due to the lack of joy in their work; the joy of creating and seeing the fulfilment of some work in its entirety. As a cog in the industrial machine the workman loses his grip on life. And the agricultural labourer isolated in a lonely cottage, working often from morning till night without another human being visible to appeal to, through lack of fellowship cannot live his life fully. It is natural that he should become insensitive to the quickening of thought

usually animating those working in association. "I have said it often enough, but I must say it once again," wrote William Morris, "since it is so much a part of my case for handicraft, that so long as a man allows his daily work to be mere unrelieved drudgery, he will seek his happiness in vain. I say further, that the worst tyrants of the days of violence were but feeble tormentors compared with those captains of industry who have taken the pleasure of work away from the workmen. Furthermore, I feel absolutely certain that handicraft, joined to other conditions, of which more presently, would produce the beauty and pleasure in work above-mentioned: and that, if that be so, and this double pleasure of lovely surroundings and happy work could take the place of the double torment of squalid surroundings and wretched drudgery, have we not good reason for wishing, if it might be, that handicraft should once more step into the place of machine-production?"

The force of the French saying, *Toujours perdrix*, is as keenly felt by the English workman as by the French *ouvrier*, if indeed either the French or the English

workman ever stands much chance of getting too much game. The Japanese have a proverb, too, that "bean sauce that smells too much of bean sauce is not the best sort of bean sauce." So it is with the English mechanic and the agricultural labourer. The carpenter who has been at work with his tools all day does not want to return to the bench after tea. The agricultural labourer at work hoeing turnips all day on some farmer's land is not particularly keen about trudging up to the allotment ground after his evening meal to hoe his cabbage-patch. This accounts for the partial failure of the allotment system for the agricultural labourer, and also for its striking success for the mechanic or urban worker.

The Simple Life need not necessarily be a dull life. A change of occupation will be entered into with zest by the man who has worked all day at one particular job. The ploughboy may possess the joy of the artist as he follows the plough. I have written elsewhere: As the strong, deep line is drawn across the acres of seared stubble he may strike the impelling, vivid line sought for so eagerly by every artist as he stands before his canvas at the inception of his creations. The

ploughman thus marks out his broad line of perspective with that simple instrument which has been the agricultural craftsman's chief tool for so many centuries, and with it he draws line after line until the field of mottled green and pale yellow is transformed into rich shining Vandyke-browns. . . . There is beauty in his work, creative and scenic beauty such as falls to the lot of very few of his brother-craftsmen in towns. But no Ruskin has ever taught him to see clouds. Pan has never piped to him. In his conditions of labour, in his home, in his dwarfed, toil-smitten figure there is little else but soul-destroying sordidness. Yet when he comes to sow the golden grain over every particle of the prepared soil, the life of the multitude lies in the palm of his hand. And this, I have written as a field worker, and not as a man of the study.

But the ordinary boy on leaving school has been so taught that he sees no beauty in the work of the fields, and to prevent him from drifting into a town something more than village halls with entertainments, given by a class other than his own, is wanted. He needs some other interest in life besides that of working the land: something that will satisfy

the mechanical or artistic craving which has been stimulated by modern education and the modern press. He must be able to catch a glimpse of a future in which he can see a likelihood of earning a living on land tilled by his own hand, of sleeping under a roof that he can call his own, and of varying his labours in the field with work at the bench, in the studio, or in the woods. It will not be by Morris Dances, or village institutions, excellent as these are, that we shall keep our intelligent youngsters from becoming American citizens or drifting into our own unsavoury slums.

On the other hand, many a town workman of the best type is forever seeking to escape from factory conditions. He wearily sighs for the sweet air of the open road, and would sacrifice much to vary the monotony of his toil by keeping a few hens or a cow, or by keeping bees, or by growing fruit and vegetables. He yearns to watch something grow to maturity under his own hands so that he may restore his waning zest for life.

He wants a little piece of land on which he can work when his own trade is slack, land on which he can raise for himself the basic needs of life. For the town workman to take

up his tools and become a country mechanic means that the opportunity to find fresh jobs when his last one is finished has been taken away from him. Instead of going into the next street, it probably means going into the next county. Besides, there is invariably the village carpenter already on the spot, as well as the village blacksmith, and possibly also a mason and a bricklayer.

It is evident that to gain sustenance for himself and family he must either be individually a well-known cabinet-maker, wood-carver, stone-mason, or metal worker, or he must form one of a community of fellow-workers in allied trades, sufficiently strong in numbers to undertake work together as a Guild of Craftsmen, a corporate body to which advertising would be a small item to its individual members.

The necessity for establishing workshops in the country comes home to us when we realise how phthisis seems to single out for attack our younger town craftsmen endowed with a fine creative energy. And not for this reason only, nor for the sending out into the country anæmic young men and women whose vitality has been sapped in the stuffy atmosphere of

town factories and offices; but also for the checking of that ever-increasing rural exodus of young women from the health-giving countryside to the overcrowded town.

Whilst for 1881 to 1891 the emigration to the towns amongst males amounted to 7·4, amongst women it was as much as 33·5 per cent.

It is obvious then that if the more capable young women are bent on leaving the villages for the towns the more capable young men will follow them thither. Moreover, those who have any knowledge of village life will bear me out when I say that young girls who have left the country to take up positions as smart parlour-maids, nurses, or dressmakers are strongly disinclined to renew "walking out" with the yokel who paid court to them before they donned the cap and apron or carried a bandbox.

When the country lass returns to her village for a holiday she is a "young lady" in domestic service, whose patronage is sought for by proprietors of fashion papers and of the "Princess" novelette type of literature, and she looks with a critical eye upon her swain who is still over-weighted with great chunks of clay upon his hobnailed boots.

I do not say that she has improved in character, but she has begun to breathe a different atmosphere, an atmosphere embarrassing to the lungs of the yokel. So she finds her mate in the town and there fulfils her destiny.

There are other reasons why the mating in the country is checked. There is in all probability no decent cottage for the young people to inhabit. But this takes me to another subject of which more later.

For the present we want to see how it is possible for the country girl to find work in her own village other than domestic service, or work in the fields.

I believe that it is not altogether snobbishness which keeps the cottage girl in many parts of England from working on the land. Socially, the girl who has married a small holder holds her head higher than does the wife of an agricultural labourer, but she does not hesitate to bend her back to help her husband when help is badly needed on her own holding.

This is quite a different thing to being employed by a farmer or a market gardener where she has to work in a gang, and very

often to endure a good deal of coarse chaff as well as petty tyranny. She notices, too, that London turns out its human refuse to pick hops and fruits. Would she therefore not be losing caste if she became one of a gang? The titled lady may smile when she reads this, but caste is as strong in the cottage girl as in the countess.

Once a friend of mine asked a young carter to let his wife come strawberry picking. The husband proudly remarked that it was impossible, for his wife "*was no common labourer's daughter but a blacksmith's*"!

To find employment attractive enough to keep the country lass in the country has been a problem for which it is difficult to find a practical solution, for it is a sex question as much as it is an industrial one. If you find work for girls which has a refining influence there must also be work for young men which has the same effect on character. The setting up of hand-looms and spinning-wheels, the making of baskets, the binding of books, and other handicrafts suitable for feminine fingers are excellent things in their way, but unless there is also the potter's wheel, the carpenter's bench, the blacksmith's anvil, the engineer's vice,

the woodman's hut, or the small holding for the man, we shall not get very far with the recolonisation of England.

The glamour of the town has forged fetters which it will take a generation or two to break. Trades where both men and women can, more or less, work in association and live in village communities will have to be established in the countryside.

It must be admitted, I think, that intensive culture, except in favoured, early sites, or where the fertility of the soil is great or the facilities for marketing unusually good, will not make very much headway. This highly specialised occupation will remain speculative while we live in a competitive age. The mixed small holding is of a more stable character, that is the holding on which food is largely produced for the house, but this often requires some other craft attached to it to attract the young back to the land, or even to make them stay on the land—a craft which brings in ready money in winter and adds to the attractiveness of rural work and life.

At Winterslow we have seen how the cottage girl can earn a little extra money at a pleasant craft by spinning wool on the wheel.

This is taken to the weaving shed in the village where it is woven into a good homespun cloth. And on a hillside farm cut up into many holdings she can probably see her future mate in the summer harvesting his corn, or in the winter she may hear the echo of his axe in the woods near by where he will be felling trees, fashioning hurdles, sheep-cribs, or wattles out of the underwood. Here, for the girl, there is some other occupation besides the domestic one, and for the young man some other craft than that of tilling the earth.

Beyond Salisbury, just as you enter the Plain near Stonehenge, there is the Stonehenge Woollen Industry which was started by Miss Lovibond. This industry which Miss Lovibond told me doubled its trade last year, has undoubtedly had the effect of keeping the country lass in the village, spinning and weaving on the hand-loom. But what "uplift," as the American would say, there is to keep the enterprising young man in or around the village I have yet to discover.

Philanthropists, and other benevolently minded ladies and gentlemen, so constantly lose sight of the fact that the young men and women of the working classes are human

beings endowed with the same emotions as those of the leisured classes.

At three other handicraft centres, at Campden in Gloucestershire, at Haslemere and Compton in Surrey, we get, perhaps, the most interesting group of craftsmen in England. But here again we find that the groups of workers are chiefly composed of one sex. At Campden they are men, at Compton they are men and lads, and at Haslemere they are chiefly women.

Of these three centres Campden is the most compelling. Here we find a group of town craftsmen, who by migrating from London, work in an old silk mill at their various skilled crafts, and when trade is slack labour on the 77 acres of land which they have acquired amid the Cotswolds. It is the most striking example of the workshop plus the land movement. And it is not only the career of these town craftsmen that this migration affects, but also the future career of many a young countryman brought into contact with men endowed with an artistic, creative energy.

"It is the constant perception of beauty that is an amulet against the coarsening effect

of manual labour, and a substitute for many of the refinements of civilised indolence," wrote a reviewer when noticing my book, *A Few Acres and a Cottage.* In return for the practical knowledge which the countryman gives to the townsman on the cultivation of the soil, the town craftsman gives to the countryman a glimpse of artistic creation which could be moulded of the clay under their feet and carved from the wood in the forests. The value, too, of a new social life infused into the dry bones of decaying villages like Campden, where high thinking has long been divorced from simple living, can hardly be too highly placed.

Not long after the settlement of these town craftsmen in this mediæval village, left high and dry, and stranded among the Cotswold Hills since the industrial revolution, technical schools, art classes, social clubs, swimming-clubs (which followed the making of a swimming-pond) were formed in rapid succession, and even Hodge, who had almost lost hope on his 12s. a week, began to take heart of grace. The craftsmen, unable to cultivate the whole of their 77 acres themselves, invited Hodge to come and take a hand.

The craftsmen whose physical outlook was no longer trammelled by the prison walls of streets and factories, whose perception of beauty was no longer dulled by the ugliness and sordidness of the towns in which they worked, found that new visions of beauty came to them as they followed the plough, traversing the hillside with eyes clarified by the clear air and lungs sweetened by the fragrant sweat of the earth.

Yet the question forces itself upon us: how could craftsmen who were employed in performing fine and delicate work, such as chasing silver, enamelling, designing and carving in wood and stone, become tillers of the soil and not feel the effect in the workshops after a hard day's toil on the land?

I have interviewed several of these craftsmen, and whilst one or two of them have confessed that their hands would shake at first after working on the land, they said that after getting themselves into training in the use of the spade, agricultural labour ceases to affect the delicacy of their touch in the workshop or the studio; and as designers the contact with the earth gave to their work

a quality of freshness impossible to acquire in the city.

To the blacksmith and the carpenter, and all craftsmen accustomed to hard, physical labour, there should be nothing foreign in spade labour, though it was a carpenter who admitted to me that digging brought into play muscles very little used at the bench, causing a stiffness in his limbs when he returned to the workshop from the land. As far as the blacksmiths are concerned, it is quite the common custom of the village blacksmith all over the country to rent a field or two at the back of his smithy.

I am writing now of some of the most skilled enamellers, silversmiths, carvers in wood and stone that we have in England. Their work, indeed, is known all over the world, and when an American college desires corbels carved on its walls, it has to send to Alec Miller of Campden both to design and execute these. The increased virility of their work is surely accounted for by the fact that the artists live so much in the open air.

Though work with the spade may cause the hand to shake when using the brush or the graver's tool, there is, as a rule, no

necessity to go direct from the holding to the bench. According to the weather, the season of the year and the briskness of trade, a day or two, or even a week perhaps, might be spent continuously on the land, and then a week or two perhaps in the workshop.

One of these craftsmen, a silversmith, has become a farmer of 40 acres. He has married into yeoman stock, and it is quite refreshing to observe the difference between the furniture inside the stone farmhouse of the newly married yeoman-craftsman, and compare it with the early Victorian furniture, the oleographs, and the terrible portraits seen in the farmhouses round about. So much do the craftsmen value the work of their fellow-craftsmen that they pay one another handsomely for simple but beautiful pieces of furniture; and I have seen one or two engagement and wedding rings beautifully wrought in gold on the fingers of this community of craftsmen.

It is said by many that the townsman, especially the born cockney, never settles down contentedly in the country. At Campden there is a craftsman, a French-polisher by trade, who has lived all but the last few years of his life in the purlieus of Bethnal Green, and I doubt

whether during all this period of town-life he has ever cultivated anything in the open air beyond that which he could grow in a back-yard; and yet earth hunger in this man is so strong that I found him lightly wearing his threescore years of life, and forking out the twitch one bitter winter morning on his bare acre-holding on the wind-swept Cotswolds.

"My trade has gone to pot," he said, "but I don't care. This is what I love." Just that bare acre of earth on which not a green thing was to be seen, nothing in fact to give it the cosy feeling of home; not a shed nor a hedge to distinguish it from that of anybody else, with his cottage a mile away in the village! Even his home had been turned into a small-holder's warehouse, for one bedroom was full of trays of sprouting potatoes, and downstairs a room was filled with sacks of grain and meal produced on his holding.

Our cockney agriculturist wisely produced largely for home consumption, and not for the market. In the kitchen hung a side of bacon which had once been a part of his own pig fed on the meal ground from his own grain. His own plucked chicken and eggs were on the larder shelf, and he produced a loaf which had

been made by his wife from flour ground at the miller's out of his own bag of wheat.

It is difficult to imagine a more unkind piece of earth to till than this wind-swept hillside smothered with couch-grass; and nine miles away lies the vale of Evesham where the air is as mellow as that of a Provençal village.

With the insistent call of the land in this Cotswold village a new desire has arisen among the villagers to find expression in the creation of things of beauty. Several of the lads have been taught to work in metal, to carve wood, and one or two of them, I hear, have become skilled silversmiths. So alive has the whole village become to an artistic interpretation of life, that a perfect uproar was raised when a shopkeeper proposed to introduce a plate-glass window into the old-fashioned, romantic village street!

Secondary education has been advanced a stage with the formation of a technical institute with a smithy, and one young craftsman cycles out to the surrounding villages to teach raw country lads the elements of drawing.

Immediately there leaps to the mind the

new question as to what extent can we train country lads to become skilled craftsmen in wood, iron, silver or stone, without creating a new artistic proletariat that have no means of finding employment for their talents.

In Denmark the parent is swift to take advantage of every educational improvement for his sons and daughters. He will pinch to let them go to the high schools and colleges, because he knows very well that what they learn there will equip them for their future career. The Government of Denmark does not let the youth of its country run to loose ends when it leaves the High School. The winter school will cost the farmer only £10 for his son or £6 for his daughter: the Government finding the balance of the cost of maintenance. Then, too, there is nearly always a position on a farm waiting for him when he can use his knowledge for his own benefit and that of his country.

Our *laissez-faire* traditions have let education grow completely out of joint with economic conditions. The country worker knows that the education with even the "rural bias" which Sir Robert Morant urges upon our country schools, fits boys for little else than to

be clerks and shop assistants. The child loses interest in a system of education divorced from life as it should be lived in the country. The large farmer is never slow to take advantage of the apathy of the labourer to reduce education to its irreducible minimum.

Mr. Balfour saliently remarked in a speech made in the City in 1908: "You will never have individual initiative carried to its most effective limits, unless you give that security to the results of enterprise which it used to be thought was the primary duty of a government to give."

That is just the very thing we do not do, and yet with the power now granted to municipal authorities, and the institution of the Works Department by various Town and County Councils, how easy it would be to train for public service the young craftsman in technical and the secondary schools. By inspiring more craftsmen with a sense of beauty we might strike a blow at building those terribly ugly edifices used as schools, colleges, hospitals, workhouses, infirmaries, village halls and cottages.

With the growth of Democratic representation, education in the beauty of design

should have far-reaching results in country districts, for we should have the collateral advantage of getting men of taste on Rural District Councils, responsible for the passing of designs. The ordinary builder whose work has acted like a nightmare on all those who have sought peace and beauty in the country will then receive a check. We might begin to get councillors with choice ideas.

Much, too, might be done in the country individually, by the influence of artists, who are beginning to take up their abode in remote country districts. I have in mind one young artist in particular who feels that pictures are no longer wanted, and occupies his time in designing and making book-plates. His presence in the village has had a magical effect upon the work done by the village blacksmith and the local house-builder, painter and decorator. On the inside of the smithy door may be seen chalk designs for coal-scuttles, bellows, fenders, gates, etc., suggested by him to the blacksmith out of his love of creating beautiful designs for simple, useful things. The colour schemes of the local house-decorator too have improved under the tutelage of this artistic friend of mankind.

The presence of one or two well-known artists in the Sussex village of Amberley, which lies picturesquely hooded under thatched roofs, has, I know, withheld the ravaging hand of the jerry-builder destitute of taste, and the influence of artists who have taken up their residence at Haslemere and Campden is already discernible.

At Haslemere the Peasant Arts Society received its creative inspiration from Mr. Godfrey Blount. This artist gives up much of his valuable time to designing table-cloths, embroidered linen towels, pinafores, and carpets, which are either spun or woven on the hand-loom in his house, where most of the rooms have been converted into working rooms, or at the Haslemere Weaving Industry, instituted by Mr. and Mrs. Joseph King.

The colour schemes in many of these designs are very beautiful, and I understand that Mrs. Blount is now largely responsible for them. It is she who superintends the work of the dozen or so of girls drawn from the district.

At St. Cross, and especially at the larger workshop of the Haslemere Industry so charmingly housed, the handicraft woman is more in evidence than the craftsman. Here, though

most of the girls are drawn from the working classes, opportunity is given to the gentlewoman who wishes to learn a trade which she can work at in her own cottage. Yet handicraft at Haslemere is not limited to that particularly associated with feminine fingers, for wood-cutting, iron work, and pottery are also encouraged, and indeed any rough attempt on the part of the peasant to grope his way to God with his own hand, as, I think, Mr. Blount would say, has a chance of being exhibited in the charming shop that gives distinction to the Haslemere High Street.

Though the work at Haslemere is executed by fingers less gifted, it makes a greater sensuous appeal to the eye than the work at Campden. Handicraft amounts to a religion at Haslemere, where in the little green barn of the country church, prayers are uttered every morning in the breakfast hour by work girls and craftsmen, who ask God to "deliver us from the Egyptian bondage of profitless work, and to lead us safely through the Deserts of Infidelity and Aimlessness and Ignorance to the Promised Land of Aspiration and joyful effort." The Haslemere ideal was well expressed by Mr. Blount to me when he said

that he considered it more desirable that a workmen should express himself clumsily with a chisel than that a great artist should arise every now and then out of the race.

Those who possess a plot of land strenuously labour on it at sunrise and sunset, but as land is held up by its owners round this village and is ever rising in value, little land is obtainable in spite of the demand for the earth. It was pleasing to find that the oak used for some of the furniture made at Haslemere was felled at Cranleigh near by, so that in this industry, as in that of making pots from the noble clay round Compton, we get nearer the real thing—that is, the conversion of local material into useful as well as beautiful works of art.

Mr. Hunter had his St. Edmundsbury Weaving Works here at one time, where on his large hand-looms he wove silk into a cloth of gold for Nero in Stephen Phillip's play, and superb altar-cloths for some of our great cathedrals. He has now taken his works to the Garden City.

One cannot help feeling that in spite of the sincerity of the pioneers of the handicraft movement at Haslemere, that preciosity is in

the air. I was told before I went there that I must be careful not to enter a Haslemere room in a colour scheme of green with a red tie, or I should cause certain unpleasant vibrations in the air. The word "peasant," too, has become rather a cult, and when one sees the word hammered out on metal over a West End shop which is the London depôt of the Society, somehow the word uncomfortably suggests a pose. And I remember that it was a Haslemere lady who once introduced me at a garden party with great enthusiasm as one who had become "*quite* a peasant."

Yet there are two things for which one is grateful to the Haslemere handicrafts. One is that the work-girls employed there receive a wage higher than the Winterslow spinners and even higher than the Wiltshire labourers, for they earn fourpence an hour, and the Haslemere industry is, I am told, a self-supporting one. The other thing to their credit is that though many of their productions are necessarily high priced, they do produce some useful household furniture which comes within the means of ordinary cultured middle-class people.

Many years ago Ruskin made the challeng-

ing statement that "cheap things make cheap men." But we were then puffed up with commercial pride and our economists laughed at him. "Now, suddenly," as Mr. C. R. Ashbee says in his stimulating book, *Craftsmanship and Competitive Industry*, "we are faced with the phenomenon, a monster with two heads, that we have never observed before. A vast output of useless, sweated, cheap industries, a vast growth of nerveless, characterless, underfed, cheap men and women. The monster stands face to face with our civilisation, it threatens to extinguish our culture, to destroy our life as a people."

Cheap men react upon industry, in that they, driven by necessity, demand cheap goods. So the more artistic productions are at the present denied to the great mass of the working people. Yet among the more highly paid of the artisan class there is a growing tendency to abolish the cheap and nasty bric-à-brac articles in house furnishing, causing repeated purchase and a tax upon the time and temper of the already overworked house drudge, and to substitute for these hideous and useless articles others of utility, beauty, and durability. Dust-bins will not be

so easily filled up, and the homes, even of the working classes, will be more simply, yet more splendidly furnished, as taste as well as conditions of labour improve.

Would that we could abolish from builders' plans, for the sake of the housewife, that useless room with all its heathen gods dedicated to the memory, as Mr. John Burns has said, "of the rent collector, the insurance agent, and the undertaker."

I even came across this fetish of cottage-building on Mr. Fels's estate by the lonely shores of the Blackwater. I was told by his manager that this room was still worshipped by the labourer's wife. I very much doubt it, though, and it is very evident that she would be much more comfortable with a larger living-room in these otherwise remarkably good cottages erected at so low a price.

At Compton, near Guildford, where the Potters' Art Guild owes its formation to Mrs. G. F. Watts, a co-operative, self-paying, industry has grown up out of making pots and garden statues from the Surrey clay. Many of these are exported to South Africa packed in the large wicker baskets that are made in this same neighbourhood.

The educational value of Mrs. G. F. Watts' Hostel at Compton has extended to the villages round about; and many a lad showing taste in designing and modelling in clay has been taken from the technical and secondary schools and kept at Mrs. Watts' Hostel and there trained in the modelling room at Compton.

Fascinating as are all these modern manifestations of revolt against machine-made articles, interesting as is the tendency to fashion things with the hand in country workshops, and so humanise work, a great deal of it is still bound to be beyond the scope of the ordinary rural worker born in the country cottage. His craftsmanship will belong to what we may term agricultural life. Nearly every farmer nowadays complains of the lack of good thatchers, skilled woodmen, experienced shepherds, capable hedgers and ditchers and rick-builders, and of the few men left who can cleave a thatching-rod or a hoop in the woods, to say nothing of finding a competent hurdler. Though I live in a woodland district surrounded by 1000 acres of wood, the only men apparently capable of making wattles are two brothers who travel from village to village.

Education to counteract this lack of skill in the agricultural labourer is only supplied by evening classes where the schoolmaster, without any agricultural knowledge, gives lessons in measuring a haystack. This is, I suppose, what the Board has meant in the past by giving education a "rural bias," that is, a bias towards giving lads an aptitude to sit on a stool in an auctioneer's office.

In Ireland the county council agricultural instructor, who has either been a farmer or is the son of a farmer, will, as we have seen, take off his coat in the arable field and show a group of farmers how to handle a plough of modern design. In Hungary and Denmark winter schools are established in the villages, in which the young men are shown by an instructor who knows how to weave a hedge, thatch a stack, or cleave a rod with an adze.

Educationalists in town so often forget that the countryman learns more by his seeing than by his mental eye. It will take the countryman a week to learn from printed descriptions and diagrams what it will take him an hour to learn by a practical demonstration in front of his eyes.

To create a lasting interest in agricultural

craftsmanship, it is necessary to formulate a land policy which will give every young man a chance to employ his newly-acquired knowledge for his own benefit rather than for the benefit of a farmer. If he be a woodman small holder, such as we see at Winterslow and at Far Forest, let him be taught how to turn a rake-handle, how to punch out the teeth for the rake, how to turn spokes for a wheel, how to repair and paint a cart, how to make a field-gate, and how to build a shed or a dairy, so that much work now sent away to urban centres, and creating an unhealthy environment, be done in the heart of the country, and performed with as great a skill as is to be found in the best of urban workshops.

The village smithy should glow with greater brilliance in the life of the country people, and I think it would had our country blacksmiths a better training. Any one who has worked in fields with the hoe, the scythe, or the fork; or in the wood with the adze, the hook, the axe, the old round-nosed bit, the punyard, or the hawk's-bill, will know how necessary it is to get tools shaped and sharpened to that exact angle and edge necessary to work with ease on the peculiar

soil, or in the wood characteristic to each neighbourhood. We know how inadequate for the job the machine-made shop tool often is, and how useful an intelligent blacksmith is who knows the exact requirements of the individual worker—how the hoe has to be drawn out, how the scythe has to be set, how the bill-hook has to be curved.

I doubt if the bark-stripper's punyard or the hurdler's hawk's-bill could be bought at the ordinary ironmonger's. It is the village blacksmith who usually has to make these to order. But the country blacksmith, destined to spend his life amid many risks in shoeing horses, has become a poorly-paid worker. He, at any rate, should have a better technical education, spend shorter hours in an atmosphere heavily charged with grit and smoke, and be given access to the land on which he can work some hours every day in the pure air.

Workers in wood might be multiplied were forestry more encouraged by the State. Beech for chair-making, for instance, might be more generally grown, for the woods at High Wycombe have long failed to supply all the raw material, much of which has to be imported. "Can we not have again," as Mr. Ashbee

says, "our gates of cleft wood that yield to a horse's easy pressure, instead of the factory planed laths that snap?" Basket-making business might be easily revived with a little encouragement from the Government. It is with pleasure that I notice the Welsh Industries Association have applied for the grant from the Development Commissioners of £2000 per annum for five years to encourage the growth of osiers in South Wales. Even the silvery birch, so delightful to view from the æsthetic standpoint, can be turned to good account with the axe by the making of clogs for the factory-workers in the Midlands. Indeed, in the north corner of Yorkshire a large rural industry in clog-making goes on in the woods where the silver and green birch stand in plantations twenty years old. No town factory has yet encroached upon this purely rural handicraft. It is only when the soles of the clog fashioned out of the birch have to be fitted with leather uppers and straps that they come under the factory system. Unfortunately the Small Holdings Act of 1908 disallows land being taken for any other industry but that of agriculture. This should be amended, for as it stands it stultifies the

expansion of rural industries naturally ancillary to husbandry.

To revive village life, not only must land be given to the mechanic, but the tiller of the soil should be taught a craft to which he can turn his hand and exercise his creative faculty when the earth lies sodden under sable clouds. The country girl must be given some other outlook in life than that of domestic service, some other chance of a mate than an ill-paid agricultural labourer. Let him be a worker on the land by all means, but a worker who has joy in his work and obtains an adequate financial reward for his industry. And it must be clearly understood that no amount of agricultural education will ever arrest the rural exodus unless the wages paid to the village labourer are high enough to render unattractive the lure of the town, with its higher wages and its greater freedom.

CHAPTER XII.

THE URBAN EXODUS.

THE recent Census Return of 1911 shows an increase of 10·2 per cent in rural districts—recording a pushing out of the tentacles of suburbia farther and farther afield. We have been painfully aware for some years back of a rural exodus; but there is also, we joyfully note, an urban exodus.

Two forces have been at work elbowing the townsman out into the country—one, the economic pressure of town sites driving the manufacturer out into the country, and the other, the natural desire of the colonising Englishman for the open road—or even for the road planted with the dusty laurel or the attenuated lime. If the townsman cannot work in the country by day, he will at any rate breathe its pure air at night.

We have seen the practical organised result of all this in the rapid formation of the Garden City of Letchworth with its 3818 acres, Kenilworth with its 1000 acres, Bournville with its 525, Port Sunlight with its 350, Woodlands with its 127, and Earswick with its 120. An economic idea has been sown, and out of it has arisen the modern "garden village."

These are all highly capitalised schemes, dependent chiefly upon one or two large industries taken from the towns and planted right out in the country. Besides these, there are indications recently of the townsman with a little capital setting out to start a new life in the country, and forming those small-holding settlements which are recruited almost entirely from the towns. They, however, have had very little effect in emptying the congested slums of the towns. That is a problem we have yet to settle, and one which cries aloud for immediate solution. With railways owned by the State and lower passenger fares, congestion might be easily relieved. Indeed, it is only through State control of transit that our town workers will ever be able to live like the Belgian urban workers often happily do—twenty miles out in the country.

New countryside industries, such as Chivers's jam-making at Histon, which draws many young women out from Cambridge, and Mr. Wilkins's at Tiptree, Essex, which keeps young women in the country instead of letting them drift into our towns, are industrial movements which make for national health. But these are dependent more or less upon factory conditions of life. What is perhaps more interesting to us in these pages is the settlement of the man with his family on the land from which he hopes to derive the best part of his livelihood.

Now there are a large number of our lower middle classes, and the more prosperous of the working classes who seize every opportunity to escape from town conditions of life to win a partial, if not a whole livelihood from the land. There is, too, the same unrest among the girls of the middle class, who, after a training at Swanley and other colleges such as Cardiff University, as well as at hostels such as that of Lady Warwick's, seek to become lady gardeners, beekeepers, etc. Has not Mr. Tickner Edwardes drawn a charming picture in his fascinating book, *The Bee-master of Warrilow*, of girls, once anæmic typists, now

winning health, if not large earnings, on a bee-farm in Sussex ?

If you stand on the top of Leith Hill, your eye will be arrested, as it roams the Weald, by a number of red and white cottages some six miles to the south-east. This is the Cudworth estate of small holdings, which is by some regarded a failure as a small-holding settlement. Yet in spite of failure from the purely agricultural standpoint, here we get an estate of some 400 acres on the borders of Surrey and Sussex on which some forty or fifty families have erected houses and are working daily in the open air.

It is interesting to note that every one of these families has come out of a town. A few of these back-to-the-land folk, it is true, need not work for their livelihood ; but whether or not they are spurred by necessity, every one keeps some live-stock and does some gardening, and the children, instead of being brought up in the Old Kent Road, Brixton, or Stoke Newington, are taught to plant a tree, to handle a hay-rake, or to milk a cow. They will live intimately with the wind, the clouds, and Mother Earth.

A few of these settlers are attempting, and

one or two are actually succeeding, in spite of many drawbacks, in earning an entire living from the land. The majority, however, have a small income—it may be but a few shillings—and practise some other craft besides that of agriculture, or earn part of their subsistence by working for others on the land.

The obstacles were many at Cudworth. The farm, like many others offered for small holdings, had been starved by the last tenant, and the Small Holdings Association, which bought it for about £12 an acre, resold it to the small holders at prices varying from £20 to £35 an acre. But speculation in sites did not stop here. Since then some of the small holders have been obtaining some "unearned increment" for themselves by selling fields at £50 to £60 an acre. This is one of the evils (from the future small holder's point of view) of peasant proprietorship.

Then the land is of a heavy clay, and quite unsuited for the purpose for which it was originally bought, that is, for market gardening. As Lord Onslow remarked at a luncheon in the village hall (at which I was present), "If small holdings can be made to pay here where the soil is hungry and heavy, and far

removed from local markets, they can be made to pay anywhere."

The farm is from three to four miles from a railway station, and seven or eight miles from Dorking, Reigate, or Horsham. Furthermore, the farm is surrounded by preserves, and fruit cultivation is carried on at great expense, for every row of strawberries and every individual currant-bush has to be closely netted. Then the method of paying for the land by twenty half-yearly instalments proved to be too heavy a burden for those who were not small capitalists. Added to this burden were the instalments payable for building.

Professor Long, the originator of this scheme, said that the country labourer could have a yard of land for the price of a glass of beer; but the country labourer evidently thought he would have to sacrifice too many glasses before he could acquire the smallest holding of three acres. Hodge made no appearance on the estate as a purchaser; instead, he grinned with scepticism as he watched small urban shopkeepers, mining, mechanical, and even marine engineers, non-commissioned officers with a pension, a chemist, an ex-civil servant, and

other townees essay the country life, and helped as the hired skilled labourer to repair the mistakes made by the novices.

Most of these back-to-the-landers made a gallant attempt at poultry farming at the start. It is curious to observe the close affinity that somehow seems to exist between the townsman-turned-farmer and the hen. Disillusionment soon follows the undigested perusal of poultry papers, and it was inevitable that the pioneers of Cudworth working individually should take up poultry farming and lose money at it.

The individualism engrained in the small business man operated against agricultural prosperity at Cudworth. Each small holder attempted not only to produce individually, but also to market individually, and even to compete against one another in the small local markets, with, of course, disastrous results. The upkeep of a horse and trap on holdings sometimes of not more than five acres of poor grass-land, with only a small patch for a garden, is distinctly uneconomic; and when that horse and cart has to be driven sixteen miles by its owner to market, with half a load taken in and none at all returning,

you can easily see how the individual system breaks down. The spectacle of small holders each wasting time and money in driving his own trap with a small freight three or four miles to the station and back again is one which would call forth derision both from the Irishman and the Dane.

The estate is suitable for dairy farming, and there is a tendency in the small holders to gravitate in that direction, though one of the more enterprising of the fruit-growers has obtained a small motor car, and uses it daily during the season to market his strawberries. He, at any rate, does not feel bound to sell at any price rather than bring the stuff home again when eight miles from home. He simply burns a little more petrol and vanishes into another town.

In spite of its non-success from the agricultural point of view, the cutting up of the Cudworth farm has been successful in giving a country home to some forty or fifty town dwellers and their families, who now replace the one farmer and his two labourers—the sum total of the old regular farm staff. To succeed agriculturally, the estate should have been cut up into ten, instead of fifty holdings. Excel-

lent dairy holdings of thirty or forty acres might have been worked with success.

A much more interesting experiment in providing land for the town dweller is that which has just been started at Leigh, three miles out of Reigate. This land was purchased to meet a specific demand; that at Cudworth, before the demand was made. At Leigh 194 acres with two cottages have been bought by the Surrey County Council for the reasonable sum of £4500, and this land has been let by the Council to the Reigate Small Holders, Limited, at a rent of about 21s. 6d. an acre. The low rent shows the advantage of small holders forming themselves into a co-operative society, the members of which are almost all residents in the towns of Reigate and Redhill. The occupation of nearly all of these men is gardening, and each of them, I am told, intends to gain his entire livelihood out of holdings varying from five to thirty acres. At the same time, I am informed that most of these men possess a little nest-egg elsewhere. The County Council have built six cottages this year, which they let at a rent equivalent to $5\frac{1}{2}$ per cent on the capital expenditure.

As the small holders here have a community

of interest, and are knitted together in one society, they stand to achieve a greater success than that obtained at Cudworth, where there is a marked difference in class, in education, and in ethical aims.

In yet another Home County, Essex, it was again men and women tired of town life who were attracted to Mr. Fels's colony at Mayland, and it is not surprising that this colony, so far as a settlement of town small holders is concerned, has not been a success. The large French garden—the largest, I believe, in England—has hardly been a success either; but then who could expect to find a French garden situated four and a half miles from a railway station a commercial success? It has been an experimental garden from which others have learned lessons, and that is about all that one could have expected from it; though its manager, Mr. Smith, still looks for financial success. There is one portion of the colony, however, which is likely to succeed, and that is the large farm; and the Mayland farm is instructive in that it shows how those parts of England that lie away from the beaten track of trade, and are on heavy soil, are more likely to succeed when farmed extensively

than when farmed intensively. As far as I can see, Mayland as a small-holding colony of five-acre fruit farms has failed. It has failed because its democratic founder, Mr. Fels, put a plutocratic qualification upon the selected small holders. Men were selected for their capacity to come equipped with a £100 note rather than for the capacity to make a success of the life which was entirely new to them. It failed, too, because the holdings were too small.

It is a significant fact that men were selected at Cudworth too for their property qualifications, rather than for their capacity to till the earth with advantage.

Many of these settlers came from Woolwich and other urban districts, and yet one cannot lay the blame altogether on the unfitness of the men. In my opinion, Mayland should never have been cut into five-acre fruit farms, but rather into thirty- or forty-acre stock-raising holdings. A life which presents to the townsman six months of digging heavy, dirty land, unrelieved by any other winter occupation, is a sore test to the most ardent of earth lovers.

Evidently Mr. Fels entered into this undertaking with the best of intentions, but

with a lack of practical knowledge. It was, I believe, in 1905 that he one day strolled into an auction market in London and made a bid for a farm of 620 acres on the shores of the Blackwater. He had never seen the land; nevertheless it immediately became his property.

I remember the land before that date. I remember its Dutch landscape with here and there a group of trees or a stunted, weather-beaten hedge, and nothing but these, or the sails of a picturesque windmill to intercept the unbroken view across the glimmering Blackwater.

To the credit of Mr. Fels be it said, across this very expanse the eye now lights upon the top of brown sails of barges idly flapping in the wind, barges which yearly bring from London hundreds of tons of stable manure. We see the glittering whitewashed cottages roofed with red tiles built in a semicircular sweep for the small holders. We see too the belfry of the new open-air school, and its adjoining club and library, which, with the newly-erected co-operative stores, make up the village street.

The small holdings, of which there are

twenty-one, are divided into five-acre lots, two acres of which have been planted with fruit-trees, leaving three acres of arable land. The rent is based on an interest payable to Mr. Fels of 5 per cent on the capital expended in the creation and equipment of the holdings. An excellent system of easement is afforded in that no rent is charged the first year, a small one the second year, a larger one the third year, and the full rent is not demanded until the fourth or fifth year, which, roughly speaking, works out at £30 on each holding. Very little dairy work is attempted, most of the small holdings being devoted to market gardens.

In spite of these favourable conditions in land tenure, I found that most of the small holders were deeply in debt to Mr. Fels. I was shown how the system of co-operative distribution in sending away the produce of all in bulk to market had been perfected, so I was told, "up to the last button"; but what was the use of that when the produce was sent to Covent Garden on the chance of what it might fetch? It is like casting your throw against an enemy who plays with loaded dice. In many instances produce hardly

covered the cost of carriage. In the case of strawberries the expenses exceeded the receipts one year, and tomatoes realised less than a penny a pound after paying expenses. Co-operation merely perfected a method for making the fortunes of Covent Garden salesmen. This might have been avoided had co-operative distributers come to the rescue of co-operative producers.

A new system of selecting tenants has now been adopted whenever a holding becomes vacant. The property qualification of £100 has been abolished, and the agricultural labourer who shows sufficient capability is put into the vacant holding. He is paid a wage of £1 a week on the understanding that he produces as much as he possibly can, working harder than he ever did in his life before, and he is credited with the sales of his produce, and debited with his wages and rent. When a balance of £50 eventually lies to his credit, he is given the money with a lease of the holding assuring security of tenure for life.

The skilled man without capital is found to be a better investment than the unskilled man with capital.

Instead of sending produce to Covent

Garden, Mr. Fels's manager now sends non-returnable crates, carriage paid within a London radius, filled with farm produce to the value of 2s. 6d., 5s., and 10s. Cream, butter, eggs, honey, chickens, fresh and bottled fruit, and pork are sent away, as well as vegetables. The fundamental idea is to increase the business in such a way that the manager will be able to direct a regular and remunerative method of cropping each holding.

The administration of these small holdings, and the care taken in the education of the children in the splendid open-air school, is all admirable. Mechanism here seems faultless; but somehow one cannot help feeling that the spirit of associated labour is lacking. One cannot help feeling too, that to know how to handle men is as important in starting a farm colony as to know how to handle live-stock. It is excellent that a tract of land which formerly employed only three men and two boys now finds full employment for fifty-three men and seven boys. It is splendid too how a new village has sprung up in a waste place of the earth with its new human fauna; but though it has not outwardly the common aspects of an old English village, with its squire

and its parson, there is still the feeling of dependence here as elsewhere in those who live from hand to mouth on the goodwill of a wealthy man. One is glad, though, that there are no other outward and visible signs of English civilisation. There is no police station, no public-house, no lunatic asylum, and no workhouse.

CHAPTER XIII.

COTTAGE ACCOMMODATION.

The men who pay wages ought not to be the political masters of those who earn them (because laws should be adapted to those who have the heaviest stake in the country, for whom misgovernment means not mortified pride or stinted luxury, but want, and pain, and degradation, and risk to their own lives and to their children's souls).—Lord Acton.

Rural housing, perhaps more than the question of getting people back to the land, has baffled reformers for the last three decades. Mr. John Burns, as President of the Local Government Board, has failed to touch even the fringe of the problem. Will Mr. Walter Runciman, as President of the Board of Agriculture, reconstruct our decaying villages from his Cottage Bureau?

As cottages decay there are practically no new ones to take their places, so that not only is there no provision in many districts for young couples who wish to get married,

but the middle-aged with families often have to live under insanitary conditions.

A few extracts from the Report (1910) of one Medical Officer of Health taken from a district not remote from London (the Guildford Rural District) will suffice to show not only the urgent need for new cottages, but also the need to free them of farm tenure.

"*Albury.*—Very little building has been going on in this parish, and five cottages have been closed within about the last two years. . . . Two men working at Albury Heath have to walk from Shalford daily, a distance of at least four miles. A farmer's son, who is married, has to walk at least two miles daily to the farm. A block of three cottages belonging to another farm are very old and in an insanitary condition.

"*Wanboro'*.—Six cottages have been pulled down during the last few years, and only two of these are now being replaced. Rents are from 3s. to 3s. 6d., but most of the cottages go with the farms. The number of these is, however, insufficient, as I heard of one man who had to walk four miles daily to work; two others live in Puttenham, and a man and wife live in a shed on the farm.

"*Worplesdon.*—At least two labourers with large families were recently turned out of cottages rented at 6s. 6d. a week, and had nowhere to go to. One of them, who worked for the Council, was admitted to the Union Workhouse, and the other man, wife, and seven children were temporarily housed in one room of another cottage. In another instance, the inspector found a family of three occupying an out-building, with filthy surroundings, on a small farm.

"*Artington.*—Only two cottages have been built during the last five years.

"*East Horsley.*—No cottage-building has taken place in this parish for many years, and six cottages pulled down before the date of the last census have not been replaced.

"*East Clandon.*—My recent inspection revealed a very unsatisfactory state of things in this village, both as to the condition of the cottages, and also in respect to overcrowding. There is special need here for further cottages, in addition to the repair or reconstruction of those existing."

The rural housing question as well as the land question have presented features as baffling as that of the rustic mind. Not that

the rustic does not know what *he* wants, but that the town legislator never seems to know how to fulfil that want. Our countryside remains silent; it is only in towns, where votes are plentiful, that one hears the clatter of tongues.

The Housing of the Working Classes Act 1890 has proved a momentous failure as applied to rural districts. Though not formulated as a Housing Act, there have been more cottages built in twenty months, under the Small Holding Act 1908, than in the twenty years since the passing of the Working Classes Act. So hedged about by obstacles was it, and apparently drafted by lawyers purposely to run an obstacle-race, that the Housing Act became almost a dead-letter. It has now been supplanted by the Housing and Town Planning Act of 1909.

In this there has been an honest attempt to obtain direct appeal from the poor cottager who wants a cottage, to the highest administrative authority — the Local Government Board. There is to be no more of the old wrecking procedure of getting the Parish Council to apply to the Rural District Council, and for that body to apply to the County Council, which should again apply to the

Local Government Board, which holds an Enquiry and refers the question back to the County Council, before poor Hodge can get a cottage to live in!—the telling of the getting of which runs something like the nursery rhyme of the House that Jack built.

Now there is no need for the Rural District Council to obtain the sanction of the County Council before instituting building schemes. Furthermore, there is to be no additional price for the land on account of the purchase being made by Compulsory Order; and two of the most important improvements made in housing legislation by the passing of the Town Planning Act were that any local authority might by agreement acquire land and hold it for purposes of building, although it may not immediately intend to build; and that any four householders of the *district* can make a direct appeal to the Local Government Board without having to undergo the arduous labour of converting opposing locally elected persons as to the urgency of the case.

This is, of course, a great step towards obtaining the key to the situation. Yet in spite of the simplification of procedure, some-

how or other the four good men and true are rarely forthcoming. This the townsman cannot perhaps understand—the fear that the countryman still has of the powers that be, the fear that even if he gets what he wants he will be severely punished by the employing class which he has for the time outwitted.[1]

Now that the Finance Act has put the wholesome fear of taxation upon owners, and so checks them from placing a fictitious value on land simply because it is wanted by a public body, sites will, we may hope, be more easily found. There still remains the difficulty, however, of building cottages to let at a rent as low as the old insanitary cottages which ought to be condemned and vacated.

Whilst the cottagers who live huddled together in overcrowded insanitary cottages, without even a clean and adequate supply of water, feel that any move on their part toward getting a new cottage, through a public body,

[1] A striking exception has recently been made (January 1912) by the labourers of East Stow, who bombarded the Local Government Board so persistently with complaints, that the hostile Rural District Council have agreed to build forty new cottages. Yet we learn from Sir Arthur Boscawen (in the House of Commons, 15th March 1912) that whilst 1344 cottages have been closed under the 1909 Act, only 116 new ones have been built.

might mean not only a closing order which would turn them on to the streets, but also the implacable resentment of their landlord, who is probably also their employer, not much progress is likely to be made. And should new cottages be built, the higher rent exacted without higher wages to meet the increase, or having to face the possibility of being stranded without any wages at all, deters the cottager from meeting trouble, as he would say, half-way.

In a village in which I was elected a parish councillor, I had to make my visitations to insanitary cottages stealthily by night. In so great a fear do the cottagers live of being turned out of their wretched hovels, that I had to presume upon the fact that I was a parish councillor and assume some kind of official right to examine the dirty puddles from which the cottagers had to draw their water-supply. The owner of these cottages was not only a parish councillor, but was also something much more to the point—a rural district councillor.

In front of me at this moment lies a letter from a friend, who tells me that he can do nothing with the insanitary cottages in his

parish because the clerk of the council has the letting of them!

On another occasion, in quite a different parish, I informed a lady who took a great interest in hygiene, that several of the cottages on her large estate had nothing but stagnant ponds from which to draw their water-supply, and that several children in these cottages had been down with diphtheritic throats. She called, with her agent, upon one of the unfortunate cottagers, who, fearful of consequences, said that he himself had made no complaint. And yet, impelled either by a sense of humour or by yokel simplicity, he invited his landlady and her agent in turn to partake of a glass of the water. But neither the lady nor her agent were thirsty that afternoon! When she left, she advised the cottager to send a sample to the Medical Officer of Health! Of course this was never done, and even if it had been, assuredly the Medical Officer would have rejected a sample which he himself did not take in a special phial.

In 1910, Mr. F. Swanzy, J.P., carried out, by means of travelling correspondence, an inquiry concerning conditions prevailing in the county of Kent. The report is summed

up as follows: "Of the correspondents who dealt with housing about half complained of the want of cottages and of overcrowding and insanitary conditions. In some cottages, we are told, there are ladders to the bedrooms, bad floors, bad roofs, and sieve-like walls. Another correspondent speaks of a row of cottages unfit for habitation, but 'labourers must take them, for there are no others.' In another village complaints have resulted in a row of cottages being closed; but as no new ones have been built the effect is overcrowding. 'The worst cottages are owned by ——, and if complaint were made, we expect the result would be a notice to quit,' says another informant. In many districts, farmers hold or hire the cottages, and sublet them to their labourers —a thoroughly bad system, which goes far to reduce the labourer to a state of servitude. In some villages there are no cottage gardens. Complaints to the local authorities, the Local Government Board under the new Housing Act, are made rarely, and have not as yet had much effect."

The worst evil in rural housing is this system of farm-tied cottages. Not only does it lead to uneconomic rents and low wages, but

also to the employer—that is, the farmer—being given the opportunity to exercise any amount of petty tyranny. "Wages may be low, perhaps only 12s. a week, but there is the extra money for harvest, and I give him a cottage, or let him one for 1s. 6d. or 2s. a week; and so he is well off." This is the contention of the farmer.

In my opinion, the letting of cottages by farmers to their own employees should be penalised and considered an infringement of the Truck Act. No landlord of a farm should be allowed to delegate to the farmer the letting of the cottages on the farm.

Townsmen should remember that they enjoy comparative freedom in town compared to the agricultural labourer in the country. The town workman may never see his employers, or know who they are beyond their names or the names of the company for whom he is working. He has little fear of running up against them in the street or of having to live under a roof owned by his employers. In the country the labourer meets his farmer-employer nearly every day in the fields or in the lanes, and he feels that if he offends the master, or the master's friends, he may lose not

(1.) A farm-tied Cottage at Great Bradley, Suffolk.

The parents and six children sleep in the one bedroom shown here (with an extra bed placed in the landing over the stairs). Wages are 12s. 5d. a week.

(2.) Excellent Small-holders' Cottages.

Built on Sir C. D. Rose's Estate (Crown Lane), at Burwell; six rooms in all, and let at a rent of £8 a year.

only his work, but, what is even more important, the chance of getting a roof over his head, or indeed any employment in the neighbourhood.

In his *Secret of Rural Depopulation*, Lieutenant-Colonel D. C. P. Pedder gives us a gruesome picture of tied cottages being used as booby-traps. "Most cottages," he says, "are tied to farms. Say a farmer has a very bad one, how is he to get a labourer in and get him to stay? What is he to do? First, there is the advertisement, 'Good cottage and garden.' Much hiring is done by letter. The labourer sees the advertisement. To go and see the cottage means losing a day's wage. I wish the wives went; but they don't. And they don't encourage their husbands to go. There is the money lost to begin with, and very likely a bad head resulting from much strange beer, and after all, 'what could *he* tell if he saw it?' Such is the contempt felt for the masculine mind by our natural rulers. He applies by letter for the place, is accepted, and fetched over with family and furniture in his master's waggon. If he goes into the cottage provided, the trap falls. He will be had up before the magistrate if he refuses to fulfil his agreement of service in writing or verbal.

I must give instances. Here is one from an Oxfordshire paper of a couple of months ago. A labourer is inducted as I have described. He stays one day and goes. His plea is that he had not seen the inside of the cottage; that it was raining, and that he had no choice but to put his furniture and family under cover. The master's son says he took him round, and that he had a 'chance' of seeing the inside before he took the place. I have no doubt he might have seen it if he had insisted. But labourers have no courage to insist. He had *not* seen it. Fined £2 : 6s.; a month's wages, I suppose."

The younger generation are alert enough to know that their subjection is complete when once they are inside a farm-tied cottage. Hence it is that we get that strong disinclination on the part of the young men to become agricultural labourers and so forfeit the freedom which they feel is enjoyed by those who live in towns; and it is useless to expect that the blow to sever the letting of the cottage from the farm is to be struck by a subject race. The reform must come from the town, like nearly every other reform which shall affect the life of the agricultural labourer.

The difficulty confronting us is to get the demand for better cottages expressed by those who want them. That great Democrat of Battersea, the President of the Local Government Board, would be, we all imagined, the first to recognise this fact. He did in fact recognise this fact when he framed the Town Planning Act of 1909, but a regime of bureaucracy at Whitehall seems to have dulled his wits with regard to the village labourer. In the administration of his own Act he has shown himself adverse to holding any Local Government Board Enquiry unless a complete case is presented by the petitioners; that is to say, unless the village labourer, unlearned in letters, shows himself possessed of forensic knowledge! Mr. John Burns does not seem to realise that the country labourer has as great a horror of filling up a "form" as the educated followers of Captain Prettyman of filling up Form IV. of the Finance Act.

It seems to me that the only way to obtain evidence is to appoint Housing Commissioners just as we have appointed Small Holdings Commissioners, who shall make a tour of inspection of all districts where bad housing conditions prevail. For this is not an in-

dividual but a national problem waiting for solution. The commissioners should be men who know how to elicit information from country labourers, and the inquiry should not be made publicly where the tenant has to speak under the eye of his landlord, but held privately between the commissioner and the applicant.

There still remains the supreme difficulty to be settled of building cottages at a low enough rent to meet the pocket of the country labourer. I have often gone into this question, and I have come to the conclusion that it is quite impossible in any district to build new cottages which shall compete in rent with the old farm-tied cottages let at 1s. 6d. or 2s. a week. Either one or two things must happen. Either wages must go up to meet the higher rent (by the institution of a legal minimum wage), or a subsidy must be made out of rates, or the national exchequer, to meet the deficit made on letting cottages say at 2s. a week, which should really be let at 3s. 6d. a week to cover all charges. The burden of the Sinking Fund charge should be lifted off the shoulders of the tenant of a cottage as off that of the tenant of County Council land.

In certain districts cottages could be built to let at an economic rent. That is, where the wages of agricultural labourers stand at 18s. or £1, and where land and building material is fairly cheap. We have seen what excellent cottages Mr. Fels has erected at the cost of only £130 at Mayland. He, however, makes a point of paying his men a living wage, and his tenants are thereby able to pay the 5 per cent of interest on the outlay and thus pay the rental value. We have seen, too, that where building material, such as clay and timber, and heather for thatching, are close at hand, as at Verwood, excellent detached cottages can be built for £70. In Ireland many cottages are built for the labourer which cost no more than £100; and I would point out to those who fear that cottages being let at uneconomic rents would inevitably tend to lower wages, that labourers' wages have risen 25 per cent to 30 per cent in Ireland since the erection of cottages there in 1889.

Now, if cottages *can* be built for about £100, with the letting value of 2s. 6d. per week, there should be no call made upon the ratepayer or the taxpayer, and the slight raising of rents might have the wholesome effect of the

labourers obtaining by organisation a higher wage, and at the same time having better cottages to live in than those which they have vacated. The new cottages should at any rate give the children room in which to breathe. Those tubercular breeding dens, with low-pitched bedrooms without fireplaces and shot-holes for windows, might then very well be razed to the ground.

I am told that in the north of England, where boiler clinkers can be had for the carting, and in other parts where gravel is in abundance and cheap, and coast shingle easy to get, cottages made of concrete blocks are being built for £90. For these cottages in which cement is used to the proportion of one to four or five, a block-making machine can be hired for £6 a month. Such cottages could be let at a rent compassable by the labourer. Indeed, I know of one small-holding settlement where cottages built in this way are now being erected.

Yet we have to face the fact that in many districts building material is not to be obtained in this easy and cheap manner, and it is these districts which we cannot as a nation afford to leave undeveloped, simply because labourers

are not getting high enough wages from their employers, and land is held tightly by the present owners. In such districts the proposed Housing Commissioners should do excellent work, and if it is found that cottages could not be built at a rent low enough to meet the income of the agricultural labourer, I fail to see why farmers and landowners, who directly or indirectly benefit by the low wages paid to labourers, should not contribute specially towards the rates. This would not be introducing any new principle in the finances of Local Government. Already landowners and farmers have been rate-aided by the remission of half the rates on agricultural land, and it seems hardly fair to put an extra tax upon the village shopkeeper, the blacksmith, the publican, and the doctor, because labourers not employed by them cannot pay a rent high enough to enable them to live in a decent cottage.

There are, I suggest, two ways of getting over the difficulty of covering the cost of building. One would be a grant from the national exchequer towards any reasonable building scheme presented by a Rural District Council to the Local Government Board, and

approved of by its President. The other way I suggest is to take a greater advantage of the Building Clause (8) under the Small Holdings Act of 1908. This Act specifically states that a holding may be anything from *one* acre to fifty. The Act of 1892 stated that not more than one house should be built on a holding, but Section 8 of the 1908 Act may be interpreted to mean that two or three cottages might be built together on the same plot, provided each tenant has a holding adjacent to the building site. If this plan of building a cottage with an acre of land close to it were adopted in a great many rural districts, not only would it go a great way towards solving the rural housing question, but also it would give the labourer at least one acre, which would be an immense boon to him in times of unemployment. Besides, and this would appeal most of all to the ratepayers, the accommodation rent for an acre of land attached to a cottage should be high enough to cover all charges on outlay. The clause in the amended Small Holdings Act of 1908 giving powers to Parish Councils to build cottages on allotments of one acre is excellent. Unfortunately, though, no Parish Council have

as yet taken advantage of this clause. In my opinion the Act should be further amended, so that cottages could be built in villages on half an acre of land, and I may mention here, that during an interview I had with Mr. Walter Runciman on the 20th February 1912, he intimated to me that he was in favour of this amendment as well as one which would allow the capital charge for outbuildings to be spread over a longer period.

In recent years, concurrently with the movement of townsmen towards spending their week-ends in the country, there has also been a gradual rise in the value of old cottages. Many good people with the best of intentions have not yet realised that, in taking these old country cottages and furnishing them for the week-end, they are making it increasingly difficult for the labourer to live. It is not good that a producer should be elbowed out by a non-producer. However, as we cannot make new laws to prevent townspeople from occupying country cottages (and I do not see why we should, for I can quite sympathise with those who desire to get out of town as quickly and as often as they possibly can), we must see that new cottages are built to

prevent our countryside being depleted of wealth-producers.

There are bye-laws and the lawyers to be reckoned with. Bye-laws, however, can easily be altered, but lawyers seem destined to be with us always. I am not one of those who join in the general outcry against the bye-laws. Sane bye-laws are often the only protection that country-folk have against the misdoings of jerry-builders, but I do object to bye-laws being gerrymandered by builders, or their friends, who sit on rural district councils, framing them in their own interest.

A workman, or a person possessing no property, who is elected to sit on a district council is likely to go there with cleaner hands than those who handle property. But, unfortunately, such a person is often devoid of any æsthetic sense. It is a depressing thought, showing to what extent commercialism has debased the finer sense of beauty in man, that even the country cottager looks upon the hideous suburban villa as a palace of delight, and his own picturesque country cottage with contempt as old-fashioned. Here it is that the educated independent man with taste would come in and play a great part in the revival

of country life. It is probable, though, that owing to the opposition of "vested interest" and the apathy, or suspicion of Hodge, that he would rarely get elected. Why not, then, allow rural district councils to co-opt artists (in the widest sense) in the same way in which county councils co-opt educational experts?

Lawyers are more difficult to get rid of, judging by the composition of the House of Commons. Conveyancing is still a costly process in spite of the fact that people of all shades of political opinion agree that the transference of land should be as easy as the transference of stock.

A large landowner once told me that he sold an acre of land for the building of cottages for £100, and in totalling up the lawyer's expenses on his side and on the buyer's, as well as the mortgager's, the charges amounted to exactly another £100!

There is an Act of which few people seem to be cognisant called "The Land Transfer Act of 1875," the purpose of which was to simplify and cheapen the transfer of land by registration at the Land Registry Office in London from one owner to another, but somehow or other it has been kept dark, and the

Act has more or less become a dead-letter. Whilst penning these lines, the following interesting communication, published in the *Daily News* on the 28th July 1911, claimed my attention :—

"Mr. R. Winfrey, M.P., in conversation with our Lobby Correspondent last evening furnished some striking instances of the value of the Land Transfer Act of 1875, as to the failure of which, owing to the local authorities, the Lord Chancellor and the ex-Lord Chancellor made complaint in the House of Lords two days ago.

"In 1894 Mr. Winfrey said he moved on the Holland (Lincolnshire) County Council a resolution urging upon the Lord Chancellor of that day the desirability of creating a local land registry office in that administrative county. He was opposed by the legal gentlemen on the Council, but he succeeded in carrying the resolution.

"'Shortly afterwards,' continued Mr. Winfrey, 'three Boston solicitors started a correspondence condemning the action of the County Council, and asserted that in cases where the Land Transfer Act had been put into operation it had ignominiously failed and

greatly increased the expense and difficulty of transfer. In order to test this statement, I proceeded to register a small piece of land to demonstrate to the Boston lawyers what could be done under the Act.

"'I went to the Land Registry Office in London, and in less than one hour I had, without the intervention of a solicitor, registered five acres of land in two parishes at a cost of £1 : 4 : 6d. I was very interested to find that no less a personage than the then Prime Minister, Lord Rosebery, was at the same time registering some of his land under the Act.

"'Previous to registering this land, as an absolute owner with a possessory title I had owned it for eleven years. I have just recently entered into an agreement to sell it to the Rural District Council for housing purposes. I understand that the Clerk to the Rural District Council will be prepared to accept the title as registered; we shall apply in due course to the Registry Office for the necessary transfer, and all will be done without the intervention of lawyers, at an *ad valorem* cost of about 11s.'"

We shall have to face the tragedy of rural

depopulation with a bold heart. It is clear that as a nation we cannot afford to let cottages in our villages tumble down with none others to take their place. If necessary, England must imitate Ireland in the rejuvenation of her deserted villages and labour-starved acres. We should be prepared to spend money on recolonisation with as much patriotic fervour as in spending money on Dreadnoughts. County cottages are surely as much needed as ironclads, for in our cottage homes are born our heroes of the sea. We should regard it as a national business undertaken for the sake of the England that is To Be.

Rural problems have been given the cold shoulder by most politicians, presumably because there are not many votes to be picked up along the highways and hedges. There has been a new note though proclaimed by those who tramp the crowded streets of our cities with nothing but a bag of tools over their shoulders for their worldly wealth, that the problem of the countryside shall be their problem too—the national problem—and those who wish to solicit their votes will have in future to reckon with the birth of a new spirit in a triumphing democracy.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE COUNTRY HOUSE AND THE INDEPENDENT RESIDENT.

It has been the fashion of what might be termed Victorian writers to extol the influence of the country house and to give it a place which it no longer occupies in the destiny of rural England. In Ireland there is a section of the landowning class who are doing everything within their power, short of the great Tolstoyan requital, to improve the condition of their tenants and to pass on to them some of the knowledge which they have acquired at Dublin or at Oxford.

When I was in Ireland I was given a vivid description by a Nationalist of a little titled lady—aged fourteen—acting the blue-stocking mentor to raw Irish youths of eighteen in the evening class room. In England similar

scenes may sometimes be enacted, but in Ireland it has the added moral value in that the landowning class are preforming what they feel an act of restitution. In England, in spite of the four hundred odd Enclosure Acts dispossessing the labouring and yeoman class of some millions of acres, an air of patronage and condescension overshadows nearly every act of requital performed by the possessing class.

There is in rural England far more outward evidence of charity than in our towns, but we must not be led by this to imagine that the rich countryman is any more charitable than the rich townsman. Nowadays, as often as not it is the great town capitalist, who, having made a large fortune out of town workmen, sets up as a country squire, and spends a little of the surplus wealth created by labour in the luxury of subsidising a Lady Bountiful. The country house of George Meredith differs from that of Jane Austen as the country house of Mr. John Galsworthy differs from that of Mr. Meredith. There is less simplicity to-day than in the days of Jane Austen, and a much greater, amounting almost to a feverish, display of wealth. The motor car has cut off for ever that personal touch between

the rich and the poor man. We remember Mr. Jerome K. Jerome's lady who desired a country house within an easy carriage drive of some nice little slums. Now, I suppose the advertisement would be amended to "an easy motor drive."

On the other hand, there is, I imagine, a larger intellectual life in the country house of to-day than in the time of Jane Austen, and though this may be largely tinged with cynicism, the mental outlook is clearer than that which obtained in days gone by.

Lady Henry Somerset, who must have had a large experience of the English country house in various counties, has stated "that there is far more spontaneous happiness in a village where there is no great house than even in the best village where everything is beneficially arranged by a great landlord for the benefit of the people." "Servility and envy," once said a youth to her, "was the effect of the great house. Servility, because we are all afraid we may lose if we offend; envy, at the sight of what appears to be so wonderful and romantic."

The occupation of a country estate by a new family from town is always a disturbing

influence in village life. If the new family be very wealthy, the head of it descends upon it like a conqueror. The little village grocer and the publican may rub their hands with self-gratulation, but the parson and the schoolmaster, if they be thoughtful men, and the little lady with slender means who drives herself about in a pony-chaise, will fear the setting up of the golden calf in their midst. The labourers will no doubt regard the change from the old squire to the new squire with indifference. As an economic factor the large country house is to him what Buckingham Palace is to the sleeper on the benches in the Park. His wife may cast an anxious glance at her daughter growing to maturity. Charity will come their way, she supposes, as it came before, for they look upon it now as a matter of right, and though charity may ennoble the giver, it rarely ennobles the receiver.

Probably the most evil outcome of a large establishment in the country with a great number of male servants is in the exaltation of a false standard of life. Parasitic labour, of no use from the national standpoint, will be valued higher than honest productive toil. Male servants, selected often for their looks,

are usually over-fed, self-indulgent, and indolent in their habits, and produce a demoralising effect in the midst of a hard-working community. A large establishment has also this vicious effect upon national life, that when a proposition is made to impose a tax upon unearned increment in order to bring under cultivation land lying idle or merely marking time, the threat to reduce the number of servants employed in the large country house will bring the parasitic class, and all that they are connected with, in full hue and cry, with the master of the establishment at their head, against those who desire to produce more food for the nation.

Apart altogether from the debasing qualities in charity in any neighbourhood afflicted with the presence of a wealthy family, the feeling becomes common that it is very desirable to get well rewarded for little services —a feeling generated by the lavish tips so often given by visitors to the servant class. An air of snobbery begins to invade the village. As the villagers become more sophisticated the moral tone sinks lower. The old sturdy peasant traditions gradually become effaced. Dull though the topics of con-

versation may have been before, concerning mangolds and pigs, yet it was largely free from the vulgarity of the talk of the music hall, of champagne-swilling, of comparing the lavish display of one country house with another; free, too, it was, of the garbage of the divorce court, and all the other genteel topics of conversation introduced by the flunkeys from town.

No one, perhaps, could be more out of sympathy, intellectually and artistically, than myself with the mental outlook of those who clothe themselves in black, and with dour faces find spiritual refreshment on Sundays in the Ebenezer Chapel of the countryside; yet I cannot help recognising the greater virility of those who live outside the pale of the Established Church and the scope of the patronage of the country house. Indeed, if one were to compare the general happiness of those who live in village communities with no large country house near at hand, or even with a benevolent landlord, the greater happiness will be found with those who are endeavouring to shape unaided their own destinies.

In many places a great deal too much is done for the poor by philanthropic ladies.

What the country poor really want is not that something should be done for them, but that they should be given the opportunity to do it for themselves. Those tiresome, amateur theatrical performances by the "local gentry," should be superseded by performances given by the rustics themselves portraying their own lives. Village dances should not be performed under the patronage of any one, least of all of the vicar. They should be spontaneously organised by the villagers themselves.

The library of the village institute might very well be relieved of its ponderous tomes, as well as of its very frivolous and sporting side, such as the "Pink 'un," suitable enough, though it may be for idle moments in the country house; and books which tell of their own lives and what can be made out of their own lives put in their place. Debating societies should be organised by the young men themselves, without any intellectual deadweight to crush the diffident. Cricket clubs should not only be self-supporting, but they should also cease to support the local publican.

Though the country house with its luxury, its diffusion of meretricious standards of what is good and what is bad, its abrogation of

simplicity, and its display of wealth has an influence which certainly does not make for righteousness, there is a splendid opportunity in rural England awaiting members of the educated classes who are not dependent upon either large farmers or the landowning class for their livelihood, to exercise an influence for good.

Some one may remind me that there is the country doctor, sometimes the lawyer and the auctioneer, and always the clergyman, to help to make rural life more bearable for the poor who labour with their hands.

There are, it is true, these gentlemen; but can any one say, excepting in very rare instances, that either the doctor or the land-agent, the lawyer or the parson, have sufficient courage to battle for the poor, when in fighting it means contending against farmers and landowners, on whom professional men in the country are largely dependent for their daily bread?

Indeed, I have found that in cases of rural sanitation concerning schools and cottages, the doctor, while agreeing entirely with me or any other sanitarian, has begged to be excused from uttering any public opinion on

the case under discussion. In fact, I have found the mechanic, or even the labourer, display more public spirit than gentlemen of the medical profession. It is notorious, of course, that in the case of public footpaths, commons, schools, and rural housing, the land-agent and the lawyer invariably range themselves on the side of the possessing class.

There is, at any rate, I am told, the clergyman. He certainly has his livelihood secure from the disfavour of landowners or farmers. But can it be said of him that he is invariably beloved by the poor? There are, of course, individual clergymen who have spoken out nobly on the side of the poor, but country labourers know that the parson belongs to the same class as the squire, that he is a *persona grata* in every country house, and is imbued with the same feelings and class interests which, unfortunately, when he takes Holy orders, he does not renounce. He is still one of "the gentry," and in that phrase lies an unbridgeable chasm.

The parson, however, is a human being like any other professional man. His family is probably large and his income extremely small, and it may be that he is dependent on the Easter offerings of the wealthy, just as the game-

keeper is dependent on the tips of the guns at the autumnal carnage. He cries for peace, but unfortunately often mistakes spiritual stagnation for the peace that passeth all understanding.

Here, then, is the opportunity for members of the educated classes. Let them take up their residence in the heart of the country and help to revive rural life in the same way in which young men have joined University Settlements in slum areas. The artist, and the man of letters, who can pursue his avocation as well, if not better, in the country than in town, might very well become a pioneer in stimulating a revival of country life. There are the men, and the women too, who have small independent means—the smaller the better, for then there will be less fear of them being identified so intimately with the possessing class. There is plenty of work at hand for them to do.

When I write of the possessing classes I do not refer only to the landowning class. It is the large farmer who really possesses the executive power in the country. The landowner might be spending most of the year in town, or even abroad, or he might be merely a

sportsman, or a scholar, indifferent to everything outside of his library, park, or preserve. It is the farmer who is always on the spot, who is always to be found sitting on the school management committee, or sitting on the rural, or the district, or the county council. He has the letting of the cottages as well as the employing of labour, and it is he who is generally the implacable foe of all reform in education or sanitation, of a larger freedom for labourers, or the restoration of the land to the people.

Educated men, with a passionate love of their country, desiring to develop all its resources, human as well as material, can do, and some are doing, splendid work to help the uneducated classes to voice their wants, or to express them on paper regardless of the stubborn opposition of the farming class. Such men are a delight to meet, and I have found them working as isolated units helping the formation of small-holding societies in Somersetshire, agricultural co-operative societies in Norfolk, land and home leagues in Wiltshire, tenants' defence leagues in Yorkshire; and I have known personally two large landowners who have issued month by month leaflets

showing labourers how they were to organise themselves in order to obtain better conditions of life!

The moral support of even one independent gentleman in a country parish has a far-reaching effect, an effect which townsmen can hardly understand.

CHAPTER XV.

MANNERS IN ARCADY.

That manners in rural England may have been better before 1870, as a writer in a high-class sporting paper would have us believe, is quite conceivable. Of that time, however, I cannot speak, for I was not old enough to hold intelligent conversation with my fellow-countrymen ; but from all accounts it appears that hat-brims are now in better condition than they were then, and the hems of the cottage women's skirts are now less soiled.

I remember, some years ago, a revolutionary act in manners taking place in a Kentish village. A gallant young butcher lifted his cap to the wife of a knight, whom he served with beef—and very good beef too. As Sir Leicester Deadlock might have observed, this was opening the floodgates with a vengeance!

Her ladyship, unlike she who stooped so nobly to the butcher of Maurice Hewlett's unforgettable romance, stopped the intrepid youth and informed him that only from her social equals could she accept so bold a salute. On her side, one must recognise the high moral courage in a lady, who, though not nobly born, yet was richly endowed with the panoply of wealth. In giving vent to a freedom of speech, rare even among snobs, she had struck a true note amid her clanging discords. Good manners are only possible where social equality is assured.

In the whole of my experience in Arcady I have known only one individual of the educated classes, and she a lady, who could treat the poor in exactly the same way as she did the rich. One other of my acquaintance, who came of the stock of scholars and *grandes dames*, considered herself a democrat until she went to keep house on her brother's farm in Canada. Her Christian name was Lucy, and she declares that on the day of her arrival she knew that she was no democrat, for she shivered all over when one of the farm hands addressed her as "Lu."

The manners of the English are, of course,

notoriously bad, whether they live in the country or in the town, but I do not think that any one class is worse than another. On the whole, I am inclined to agree with Mr. Stephen Reynolds and with Mr. Chesterton that the poor are more ceremonial and courteous than the rich. They are not, it is true, gifted with the graciousness of the Spaniard or the Breton peasant. English mechanics do not struggle with their bags of tools in their hands in order to take off their cap to a fellow-workman, and to bid him "Good morning" as one sees the workman do on the Danish highroad. Nor can they refuse a tip—a rare occurrence—with the graciousness of the French workmen who helped Stevenson with his canoe on his "Inland Voyage."

"At Hautmont," he wrote, "near a dozen grimy workmen lent us a hand. They refused any reward, and, what is much better, refused it handsomely, without conveying any sense of insult. 'It is a way we have in our countryside,' they said. And a very becoming way it is. In Scotland, where also you will get service for nothing, the good people reject your money as if you had been trying to corrupt a voter. When people take the

trouble to do dignified acts," continues this Shorter Catechist, "it is worth while to take a little more and allow the dignity to be common to all concerned."

Our rustic poor have no manners like these; yet they possess a courtesy which is of a finer flavour than that of the rich. In the amenities of commerce the poor are more ceremonial. If I, for instance, want to sell a pig to a cottager, he will, on his arrival, compliment me on my view and on my cattle before he looks in the sty. Then he will tell me that the pig is a very nice pig, "ah, that she be," before the peculiar ritual of the dealing begins. There is no abrupt verbal pistol-shot, "What do you want for it?" of the upper class when purchasing a hunter or a motor car.

The rustic poor have not learnt to express themselves in print. Socially they are not even vocal. We have many essays on their manners by members of the educated classes; but when the poor begin to write about the manners of the upper classes, we shall have satire of a new and wonderful order.

The relationship between the modern country parson and the elderly labourer is sometimes, nowadays, a humorous spectacle.

A Sussex Labourer of the old order.

The labourer who has been accustomed to treating the parson as one of "the gentry" whose lack of patronage he fears, does not understand the democratic ways of the new young vicar, who is perhaps a member of the Christian Social Union. The vicar wishes to treat the labourer as his comrade and equal, calls him by his Christian name, and extends to him the hand of fellowship. Then the poor labourer with a movement in which suspicion, fear, and respect are mingled, boggles at his hat-brim, takes his clay pipe out of his mouth, and looks at his toil-smitten fist with an air of stupefaction.

It is the old-fashioned, sporting, human parson who can unbend, but at the same time maintain his position as patron, and never as servant to the people, who is still the most popular—popular in the sense that he is invariably understood.

I remember one such a parson who accosted a labourer on horseback with the greeting, "Well, Hopkins, still working for old Billy Goodman?"

"Beg pardon, sir, I am still working for *Mr.* William Goodman," replied the labourer with ceremonious dignity.

"Oh, very well then," said the parson cheerfully; "which way are you riding? Come and have a glass of beer with me."

A labourer who hedges for me told me the other day that our parson was popular because he knows his manners — apparently a rare gift—"He never visits you without knockin', and he won't come at meal times, neither."

I remember once hearing an author, distinguished for his knowledge of rural England, telling a company of friends that, after making minute inquiries into the lineage of families in the two counties that he knew best—Kent and Sussex—he found that the descendants of the old English aristocracy were in the main living in labourers' cottages. This may account for that quality of dignity, of pride in one's manhood, which is the distinguishing mark of our country poor. This may seem a strange assertion in the face of the touching of forelocks or of hat-brims, but those arts are almost mechanical, and as much a matter of tradition as it is with the soldier in the army to salute his superior officer.

The quality is sometimes an ignoble one, but it does, at any rate, distinguish the labourer from the tradesman class, which

apparently swallows insults that Hodge would never endure for a moment without forcible retaliation. I remember a man who had been working for me in the hay-fields telling me with a wry face that he had knocked another man down, and that he was sorry for it. I said, "Then, why don't you go and apologise to him?" He stared at me with astonishment, and then replied with the hauteur of a Bourbon prince, "I never apologised to nobody in my life! No, I couldna' apologise to no one!"

That the poor have a keen sense of justice and a fine feeling for human dignity I could further illustrate by an episode which occurred in a certain parish. The vicar, in his sermon, described in almost every particular except that of mentioning his name, a sinner in their midst. At the next parish meeting a labourer got up and expressed the views of most of those present by saying that if any one was going to be drummed out of the parish, he was going to be drummed out along with him, and that the parishioners objected to personal attacks being made from the pulpit.

The attitude of the country poor, in the south of England at any rate, where feudalism

has taken the longest time to die, is still, more or less, that of the mediæval villains. During the recent attempts of the suffragette party to obtain signatures in favour of woman's suffrage, I found that the poorer a man was, the more anxious he was that only ladies of property should be allowed to vote.

During hay-making, when I was working on my rick, taking the hay from the unloader and tossing it to the rick-builder, the following conversation took place.

George (the pitcher, who had been a Cockney carman). "I don't 'old with this yer suffragit business—leastways not for the domesticated woman."

I. "Who do you mean, George?"

George. "I mean the wives of working chaps like myself, though no one can say I don't love my wife. I give 'er a kiss every mornin' afore I starts for work."

Then Tom, the rick-builder, with the reticence of the real country labourer, and speaking with a touch of scorn at the glib-tongued Cockney, said, "What I does to my missus is nobody's bisiness but my own—kissing 'is missus!—ugh!"

The rustic is burdened with one foolish

characteristic, which is directly the outcome of his pride; he would rather lose his money, even his honour, than be "made a fool of." So sensitive is he upon this subject that he would infinitely prefer to remain silent rather than venture an inquiry which, in the making, would betray his ignorance. He learns, not by asking questions, but by using his eyes. This came home to me when I first began my career as farmer and persisted in asking many questions as to local conditions.

"Take my advice," said an old countryman to me, "don't ask so many questions. They will take you for a fool." Of course this did not cure me of my insatiable curiosity, and in order to stimulate curiosity in the rustic mind, I would persistently ask questions at county council horticultural lectures in the village which I might have answered myself.

It was exciting to watch the slow dawn of a gleam on the faces of the villagers intent on seeing if I should be "made a fool of." The anticipated pleasure did not come, for, to my amusement and to the discomfiture of the torpid mind, the lecturer remarked that he liked to receive questions, for they invariably indicated the intelligence of his listeners!

Another weakness of the rustic, and one not altogether confined to the uneducated classes, is its petty parochialism, displaying the mean spirit of the little Englander. I remember, when captain of a village cricket club, after a season of matches which were lost through the stream of ale running too freely on the cricket-ground, I wanted to institute certain reforms, and the secretary, who was, as usual, the village publican, demurred at a general meeting, declaring that for his part he "wasn't going to be criticised by a blooming furriner," by which term he meant one who was born outside *his* parish.

By the fostering of this spirit of parochialism we get the appalling lack of solidarity so often to be found amongst country workers.

At a meeting of large landowners, united by a common hate of the Land Clauses in the Budget, I heard one gentleman sedulously inflaming the lower and unpatriotic passions of the labourers by asking them what was the good of the Development Grant to *them*? How would the afforesting of waste places, he argued, help any to find work in a parish of flat meadows and well-tilled land. And yet, surely, as a large landowner he should have

been one of the first to foster that most precious thing, a national, social conscience.

That the younger country labourers and mechanics are becoming more independent one does not doubt, but the process of exfoliation is, I admit, not a beautiful one. No flowers emerge from this national renaissance: only a very stiff and prickly thistle. This is largely due to its unnatural growth in the rank soil of the gardens and stables of the rich. They quickly acquire the abrupt bad manners of the wealthy, and like their masters become impudent to all but those who possess wealth, or what wealth purchases — power. They have in some way to show what they consider their "independence," to regain their self-respect which they lose in their parasitic service — hence their surliness to those who in no way govern their lives.

This, however, is true in the main only of those counties where both master and man are parasites upon the producers. The poor in these counties have little sense of social injustice. That has been stifled in the individual competitive struggle for places in the homes of the wealthy.

It is curious to note how in England young

men of the middle class are ashamed to perform useful and probably ennobling acts of labour, which they are proud of having done in Canada or Australia. I have heard of a Major, it is true, who used to enter Salisbury market triumphantly on a tumbril loaded with pigs or calves, and sometimes with manure; but how many ordinary tradesmen's sons would do this; and if they did, would they not have to dress for the occasion in spotless gaiters and spotted waistcoats to avoid the danger of being taken for the carter?

The farmer class, although often educated in the same village school as the children of the labourer, are for ever inculcating into their children that they are of a superior caste, despite the fact that the farmer may not be any more refined or intellectual than the labourer. To illustrate how far this base training is carried out, I will cite a case where ill-breeding was allowed to defile one of the most sacred times of a child's life.

A lady kindly offered to make a present of confirmation caps to all the girls in her parish. At this, a small farmer, with little or no education, strongly objected to his daughter wearing the same pattern of cap as the

daughters of the labourers who were being confirmed at the same time!

On the whole, I am inclined to think that in spite of a British churlishness which seems to paralyse country people and to prevent them at times from behaving graciously, in comparison with the manners of the continental peasant, our country poor, in spite of their poverty (or is it because of their poverty?), are more generous than any other class of society; certainly, I believe, that the act of giving fills them with greater pleasure than the class which has superfluous wealth, and it would make for greater social solidarity if the well-to-do could habituate themselves to receive presents from the humblest of the poor. Lady Bountiful too often forgets that the poor cottage woman she visits sometimes finds it more blessed to give than to receive.

The ever-shifting economic conditions of those who rent the big houses, displacing the old families, are puzzling to the old labourers. In their conservative natures there is still a lingering respect for "the gentry," because these belong to the soil on which they and their fathers worked. "A gentleman" to them is essentially a member of the unem-

ployed. The only work permitted to him is a little light farm management. The old squire stayed at home and knew them all by their names, and where they lived, but the *nouveaux riches* are for ever running up to town in their motor cars on business, just like any other tradesman, and these form no more a part of the daily life of the country poor than the factory owner does in the life of his mill-hands.

"Fraternity" in France has no doubt revolutionised French manners for the better, but "Fraternity" in rural England is an almost unknown word, and the manners of our fellow-countrymen attest the lack of its divine quality.

CHAPTER XVI.

AFFORESTATION.

THERE was a time when every Englishman not only regarded his country symbolically as a heart of oak, but treasured the timber of his country as a woman treasures her chastity. To despoil our woods was to despoil our country.

It is in his relationship to timber that Dr. A. R. Wallace particularly differentiates man from the rest of the animal world: "Taking first the innumerable kinds of wood whose qualities of strength, lightness, ease of cutting and planing, sometimes of surface, beauty, and durability are so exactly suited to the needs of civilised man that it is almost doubtful if he could have reached civilisation without them. . . .

"Let us remember that before the dawn of

history down to about the middle of the last century every ship in the world was built of wood. Had no wood existed suitable for sea-going vessels, the whole course of history, and perhaps civilisation, would have been different. Without ships the Mediterranean could have been almost as impassable as was the Atlantic. America would still have been unknown, as well as Australia, and possibly Africa; and the whole world would be for us smaller than in the days of Columbus. All this might have happened if the nature of vegetable growth, while differing little in external form, and equally well adapted for an intelligent animal life, had not possessed those special qualities which fitted it for ministering to the various needs of intellectual, inventive, and advancing man."

The axe, as Walt Whitman says, has been the servant "of all great works on the land and all great works on the sea."

The planting of the oak has perhaps been the noblest tradition handed down to us in the ownership of land by the individual. The thought of an England in the future, when planting for posterity was the one quality which ennobled the ownership of land

and distinguished the old landowner from the mere rent-receiver. To-day, in spite of many lectures from Sir William Schlich, landowners have received his entreaties with deaf ears. The old feudal lord was willing to plant the acorn in the soil of his country for the glory of his country. The new race of landowners living without any feudal ties, any forced military service to the Crown, rejects the proposition to plant, on the score that the investment would hardly yield 3 per cent on the capital.

Nor can we expect many men to possess either the patriotic ardour, or the time, to practise Mr. Charles Hurst's magic pastime of planting the golden-brown treasures of Sherwood Forest wherever he comes across an open space in spinneys or coppices, heaths or banks protected from cattle and the hedger and ditcher.

In *The Book of the English Oak* we learn how this gentle patriot enriches our country as he takes his rural walks with a wallet filled with the seeds of the oak.

"The setting of an acorn," he says, "is such an important matter that I will describe my method minutely. Having selected a

suitable spot, I remove the turf very carefully with a large clasp-knife, making a circle of bared soil about eighteen inches diameter. I next prod the ground thus cleared for the depth of eight or nine inches, and remove all large stones, roots, worms, slugs, or deleterious matter that may happen to be present. I then pat the loose earth with my hands, and leave a small hollow in the centre about three inches diameter and from one and a half to two inches deep, having reserved a little soil to fill this hollow after the acorn has been placed in it. I then place the seed gently but firmly at the bottom of the hollow, and cover it to the level of the soil with the earth reserved for the purpose. This I then press down, making sure that the soil touches the acorn on all sides, and I afterwards sprinkle the spot with loose grass to hide all traces of my labour. Finally, I place a few thorns round the spot as a fence. It was my custom at this early part of my journey to address the unwitting acorn, mentally, when I had given the final pat, after the following fashion: 'Now, good hap seize thee, little seed; grow in a manner worthy of thy noble parents and be a delight for many weary men whose light

we read the Report of the Rural Development Commissioners published in July 1911, we naturally hoped, after Mr. Lloyd George's early intimations as Chancellor of the Exchequer, that there would be a large grant made for the reafforestation of waste land. Instead, we learn that no grants are proposed towards afforestation in England, because, forsooth, expenditure on an enterprise so new and so strange in modern England must be preceded by careful survey! One would naturally have imagined that a survey would have taken place by now after the Report by the Royal Commission of Afforestation in 1909, which made the statement that "afforestation being practicable, and desirable, and 9,000,000 acres being available without material encroachment upon agricultural land, the best rotation to secure sustained timber yields is 150,000 acres to be afforested annually."

Why do we hear nothing more of this definite proposal to afforestate the 9,000,000 acres which could grow as much timber as we import?

England and Wales are to be content apparently for the present with the receipt by the Commissioners of a comprehensive

scheme of agriculture. Scotland, even in the face of the tragic revelation of the Census and the enormous tracts of country which lend themselves to reafforestation (estimated at 6,000,000 acres), is only to be provided with a central demonstration area with a forestry school attached, and with small forest gardens for the local use of the agricultural colleges! Ireland comes off little better. The Commissioners have agreed to advance £30,000 for the purchase of land, and to further advances as soon as formal and definite applications are made under the Act for the maintainance and management of small woodlands in the hands of the county councils.

In Ireland, where land can be bought very cheaply in congested areas, a sum of money to be spent in planting belts of woodland to protect the newly-settled migrants in exposed parts of the country should be very useful. Here alone in the three kingdoms is there a Department of Agriculture prepared to furnish advice to workers on all matters relating to forestry, including the selection of sites for plantations, suitability of soils, choice of trees, treatment and valuation of existing

woods, draining and fencing of woodlands, valuation of timber, and the growing of osiers.

Up to July 1911 the Department of Agriculture for Ireland have acquired 7000 acres for afforestation ; a small area compared to the 3,700,000 acres of state forests of Hungary ; but still a step in the right direction.

It appears from the Report that we can do things in Ireland that we seem afraid to do in Scotland and England. And yet Scotland has 9,000,000 acres of waste land waiting for development! The real sportsman who prefers the pleasures of the chase to the love of killing as many heads of game within as short a space of time as possible, has nothing to fear from the reafforestation of the deer forests. He will win a much finer trophy in woodland areas than he would in open spaces.

Why are we afraid to reafforest waste lands of England ? The appeal to landowners has proved futile. They will probably tell you that their estates are already burdened with debts and that they do not see the advantage of sinking a large sum of money to bring in a small return. This is natural enough. Afforestation is obviously an enter-

prise requiring the resources of the State. The individual works largely for personal profit, the State for posterity.

Hungary passed an Act in 1879 which made it compulsory to reafforest de-afforested and now barren land, and it prevented the de-afforesting of land which could not otherwise be profitably cultivated unless an equal portion of land was afforested at the same time. The State of Hungary also buys forest land for pleasure resorts, or to prevent foreigners from acquiring large tracts for sporting purposes. We might, I think, follow the example of Hungary in this respect in certain parts of Scotland when the American comes a-buying large estates there for shooting; and in England, surely, such open spaces as Exmoor and Ashdown Forests might be acquired and planted by the State.

Then there are areas such as the Cotswolds where there is little water, and planting might be profitably carried out in many parts of England up to an altitude of 1200 feet.

We might begin in a small and an exceedingly useful way with afforesting the catchment areas which form the gathering ground for water for large towns. Many thousands

of acres in North Wales and Yorkshire are used as catchment areas for water-works, affording no returns to the municipalities which own them save an occasional day's sport to a few town councillors and their friends. It has been proved by having the gathering ground on the banks of the river Gileppe, in the town of Verviers in Belgium, under forest, that this is the best means of keeping the water pure and of regulating the flow.

Then, of course, there is the revenue to be derived in the future from the sale of the timber. The ratepayer of to-day may say that it is all very well, but *I* shall never derive any benefit from the afforestation of our catchment areas. One might, however, point out to him that it is one way of getting the unemployed of his town off his hands as well as off his conscience, for when unemployment is at its acutest, then is the time that labour is wanted for draining, fencing, digging holes, and planting. But if the town corporation is still unconvinced as to the civic wisdom of increasing the value of land situated in a different county, probably the best way would be to induce Government to give a grant in aid to town councils which are enterprising

enough to afforest their catchment areas. State interference or State ownership in relation to wood is nothing novel in Great Britain or in most European countries. I have instanced the case in Hungary, and then there is the striking example in Saxony, which owns over 428,000 acres of State forest yielding a net return of over £1 an acre, whilst in England only 67,000 acres of woodlands belong to the State, or $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent, a percentage which is smaller than in any other European country.

Yet in England we have traditionally regarded our woods as something sacred which needs special protective legislation. In 1543, for instance, "The Statute of Woods" was passed to prevent the owners of woods from felling the standard timber trees in their copses except under the observance of certain fixed rules, and it compelled them to store young standards of oak, or, failing that, of elm, ash, asp, or of beech, which were then the most valuable kinds of timber—oak for shipbuilding, ash for agricultural implements and bows, aspen for arrows, and beech for furniture. Thus the previously existing copsewood method of growing standard timber trees above

an underwood of hazel, oak, ash, etc., cut at regular intervals of from eight to ten, or from twenty to twenty-five years, according to local circumstances, became by a statute the typical national form of forestry.

Underwood or copsewood has, during the last quarter of a century, been hardly worth growing to yield a remunerative return to the owner. With the falling of prices for hoops, ash sticks, hurdles, wattles, poles, and the increase of the mania for game preserving and battues, the underwood has been largely neglected, and in consequence the standard trees as well.

In the days when the walls of England were of oak, standards were kept well apart, so that each tree in growing freely should provide strong knees and crooks for ships' timber. Modern forestry aims at growing straight stems close together, so as to get the largest and most valuable crop of timber per acre from the ground at the smallest cost of production; that is, where forestry in England is scientifically cultivated as a craft. Most owners, unfortunately, regard their woods merely as places of covert for their birds, and as a consequence many of our woods are

mismanaged; and though here and there an owner, who feels his responsibility as a citizen of the British Empire more strongly than his love for killing something, may be induced to start a fresh plantation of standards, invariably the rabbits and hares are so numerous amid the preserves that the tender shoots have a poor chance of surviving as they spring up from the ground or from the stubs of the underwood.

The amount of damage that rabbits and hares have inflicted upon British agriculture is incalculable. I have known farms where the farmers have gone to great expense in netting their fields of winter wheat against rabbits, yet a gamekeeper's foot has been inserted under the wire netting so that the rabbits may grow fat at the farmer's expense.[1] In spite of all that can be said by the apologists of sport adding to the revenue of the farmers, the forest sporting rights throughout England and Scotland taken as a whole amount to little over one shilling an acre. The farmer must

[1] In a motor tour I undertook in Suffolk in February this year (1912), I came across a scandalous instance near Woodbridge, where small holders could scarcely get a living out of poor heath land overrun by game. The landlord would not relinquish his sporting rights.

lose a good deal more than a shilling an acre in having a large number of rabbits and pheasants about his corn-fields and meadows; and the owner of woodlands would find it more profitable to convert his copse into high forests or even to retain them, if he cuts them at regular intervals, than to let them run to economic waste pure and simple.

The Ground Game Act does not give the protection to the small farmer that it is said to give. You can shoot your rabbit, it is true, as it comes out of the wood, after sacrificing perhaps half an hour of your valuable time waiting for it at sundown with a gun in your hands; and you may kill one, or even a brace, but that will be the end of your sport, for the rabbits will then retire into the woods until it is dark. The small farmer cannot afford to employ a rabbit-catcher, or even to snare rabbits, which often means spending time and trouble for the benefit of some one with a virtuous aptitude for early rising exceeding his own—some one who will find a use for those capacious pockets which are made in the lining of rustic coats. Even ferreting on a wet winter's day is not a very profitable manner of employing time, for

rabbits caught in this manner have cost me a shilling a head. In spite of ferreting and shooting, I once lost seventy apple-trees one winter's night of severe frost. They were completely ringed round by rabbits and hares. There is no compensation to meet cases like this.

A case could be made out for the intelligent management of woods concurrently with preserving game, but, unfortunately, wherever this is attempted it is the gamekeeper who is invariably given the precedence over the forester.

At the time of writing this book the only grants made in England for the encouragement of forestry is the small sum of £250 a year to the University College of North Wales, and the same sum to the Armstrong College, Newcastle-on-Tyne. There is the Forestry Department in the University of Oxford for the training of our Indian civil servants. The most distinguished, however, of our Indian foresters have been those who have learnt their trade in the well-managed woods of Saxony. To the making of good foresters, as well as good farmers, it requires something more than the lecture and the laboratory, and

the best government school that our Government has aided is its own school in the Forest of Dean, which is for the training of the young craftsmen of our woods.

Perhaps few people are competent to realise the skilled work that the craftsman of the woods undertakes. Not only is he a worker in applied arts, but he is also an imaginative artist. In the midst of a thicket of bramble or of clean underwood he has, when he strikes, to visualise possible rake handles, hoe handles, sneads for scythes, shafts for axes, hoops for barrels, slats for hurdles and sheep-cribs, as well as bean sticks and pea boughs, leaving what cannot be shaped for use as faggots for burning in the baker's oven or in the cottager's open fire-place. A blow delivered in the wrong place may spoil the economy of his craft.

He has, too, to wield the long-handled felling axe, to push the two-handled saw, to drive in wedges, to rip off the integument in great flakes with the punyard and the spud. "Go out ripping and you will come in ragged; go into it ragged and you will come out of it naked," is an apposite saying among woodlanders.

What a contrast is the life of the woodlander, living where the scent of the earth is good and where every sound echoes to harmony, to that of the factory worker, living amid bad sounds, bad smells, and engaged in uncreative joyless labour. It has always seemed to me that woodcraft is work which might appeal to young middle-class men with some imagination, who are willing to forego many of the luxuries of life for the sake of interesting, though strenuous work, as well as for the independence they might win for themselves on a few acres of land near the woods.

There is no doubt that our Government would be striking a valiant blow at the social canker of unemployment had they the courage to start a large and comprehensive scheme of re-afforesting our waste lands. Even without fresh legislation (as Mr. Arthur P. Grenfell points out in his valuable pamphlet, "Afforestation and Unemployment") the State might to-day, under Section 20 of the Small Holdings Act (1908), buy large tracts of rough woodland for a small sum, letting parts of them to small holders and afforesting the rest.

The words of Mr. John Nesbit (the distinguished editor of *The Forester*) bearing

on this subject are words of wisdom: "The annual bill for wood is rising rapidly and is certain to increase very greatly in future, although a very considerable proportion of what we need for pit wood and pulp for paper might very well be grown on our waste lands and low-grade pastures, while at the same time such woodlands would provide other special advantages in affording increased employment, shelter to crops and live-stock, and in tending to prevent floods and soil erosion, and to regulate and purify the water-supply throughout all well-wooded catchment areas."

In 1911 Sir William Ramsay pointed out the necessity of re-afforesting waste lands in view of the gradual but sure extinction of our coal supplies; and in 1912 we are faced with the tragedy of a national coal strike. It is at such a time that every countryman feels the injustice of being robbed of the old rights of getting fuel from common lands, and the vital necessity of re-afforesting land enclosed against his will.

CHAPTER XVII.

CAPITAL AND CO-OPERATION.

Access to the land and a cottage to live in is the first desideratum in the colonisation of England, but to withhold from the settler capital to stock his land or equip his homestead is like placing a starving man in a golden palace. We realised this plainly enough in Ireland when we began to resettle the migrants, and yet it has taken the Government four years to realise the necessity of capitalising the English small holder. It is not charity that the tillers of the soil are demanding, but the use of some of that wealth that they have already created; and they are willing not only to repay this money, but something additional, too, in the shape of interest.

A great deal has been written about credit banks, and in this book I need hardly traverse

the ground again. All political parties are agreed that there is a necessity for their formation. There is even a clause in the Small Holdings Act of 1908 which permits the county council to advance loans to the co-operative societies; but as it is a permissive clause, and county councils are as a rule impracticable, unimaginative assemblies, it has become, like the Housing Act, a dead-letter.

This section of the Act (No. 49) runs as follows: "A County Council may promote the formation or extension of, and may, subject to the provisions of this section, assist societies on a co-operative basis, having for their object, or one of their objects, the provision or the profitable working of small holdings or allotments, whether in the relation to the purchase of requisites, the sale of produce, credit banking, or insurance or otherwise, and may employ as their agents for the purpose any such society as is mentioned in subsection (4) of this section."

Now before we dwell on what the small holders should do by voluntary co-operation amongst themselves, it would be pertinent to show what county councils themselves might do as landowners and builders. This, in my

opinion, is an important, practical, and æsthetic consideration. Nothing handicaps a small holder so much at the start as to find, after he has become possessed of his land and cottage, that before he buys stock he has to expend a good deal of his small capital in the making of poultry-houses, pigsties, possibly a cowshed, stockyard, a dairy, or a fruit room and granary. Then there is the æsthetic consideration of the man in the street, who goes out into the heart of rural England for a holiday only to find beautiful sequestered spots disfigured by squalid sheds, with tarred felt roofs hanging on, as it were, by their eyebrows.

The county council might very well follow the excellent example of the Crown Lands Commissioners in the way in which they built the substantial homesteads in the fenlands of the Wash, erecting every outhouse conceivably necessary for the live-stock of a small holding.

Furthermore, by building substantial farm buildings, well planned, in central sites, county councils could at the start encourage co-operation as well as economise in the erection of farm buildings that could be used in common by a group of small holders.

For instance, take the example of a granary, which is rarely found of any size on a small holding; and yet without a good-sized, rat-proof granary you cannot expect a small holder to buy in large quantities, and therefore he loses the opportunity of buying at low market rates.

Such expensively built farm buildings as granaries and stables might very well be erected under one roof, and each small holder be required to pay rent for stall room or his private bin in the large granary. Outside in the stockyard might be erected the common Dutch barn big enough to cover half a dozen large haystacks, and a large liquid manure tank, made for the use and profit of all. Here, too, could be housed the gas-engine used for grinding corn, pulping roots, or crushing cake, and a Canadian mill erected to supply sufficient water for all. In this way, apart from the utilitarian and æsthetic considerations, the small holders would naturally become co-operators.

Now we have to consider the question of raising capital for the small holder who has to equip his holding with live-stock and implements, and this brings us back, naturally, to Credit Banking.

Since private banks became limited liability companies the advances made by the old-fashioned country banker—who was as often as not also a gentleman farmer—to small agriculturists have almost ceased to exist. The new manager of a branch, who has been reared in the atmosphere of the Stock Exchange, and would hardly know a heifer from a steer, or a gilt from a boar, is naturally shy of advancing money to agriculturists, in spite of his knowledge of the bulls and bears which haunt Throgmorton Avenue. By private effort the total capital invested in credit banks in the whole of England amounts to the ludicrous sum of £1600.

Without formulating complicated schemes, which are generally a compromise between public and private enterprise, so dear to the heart of legislators, and so bewildering to the plain man, it seems to me that the best way is the simple and direct way.

We could easily advance money without the setting up of any new public authority or the formation of any new syndicate. There is already the national bank, in the shape of the Post Office, a branch of which is to be found in every remote parish in England.

There is already the parish council, composed, we must assume, of the most trusted men in every parish. Why should not our Government give statutory powers to parish councils to draw upon the post office for small sums, making the parish council committee responsible for repayment? We should bear in mind that the credit banks in Ireland have advanced a quarter of a million without loss—money advanced on *character* and not on property as security.

At the time of writing I learn that a new bill has been framed by the Government which contents itself with paying the expenses of forming, managing, auditing, and inspecting credit societies—not a word, apparently, as to providing the money, which makes the Government bill what *Hamlet* would be without the Ghost.

Is the English peasant, we wonder, less honest than the Irish? If not, why does the Government show this extreme timidity in advancing money to men poor and honest, whilst the wealthy owners of stallions are allocated large sums from the Development Fund?

If my plan of advancing money through

the post offices to the parish councils is not acceptable to the Government, then I would suggest as the next best plan that they should advance money to agricultural co-operative societies, and in this way, besides helping to capitalise the tiller of the soil, whose labour is rendered sterile by the want of capital, it would also be a way to encourage small holders to co-operate.

Credit banking, after all, is the form of co-operation which finds the capital. Now, it is that form of co-operation which deals in buying and selling which is obviously the next step to be taken in agricultural development. In spite of the excellent progress made of late in the creation of the new branches of the Agricultural Organisation Society, England is behind Ireland and far behind other European countries in agricultural co-operation. The largest agricultural co-operative society in England is the Eastern Farmers' Co-operative Association, which, with a called-up capital of less than £1000, does a turnover of £300,000. As the members farm on an average 300 acres, we have a striking instance here of how co-operation can interest the large as well as the small farmer.

What we do in England, however, is nothing to what is being done on the Continent. In Denmark, for instance, there is a co-operative dairy in almost every parish, besides the thirty-six co-operative bacon factories, the live-stock insurance co-operative organisations, and the egg societies, which export about 50,000,000 eggs. Germany can boast of 17,000 co-operative societies, and it is said that the agricultural necessities bought through the German credit banks amount to over £4,000,000. Italy, Belgium, Hungary, and France have all made rapid strides in agricultural co-operation. Even Finland and distant Siberia are rapidly learning what it is apparently so difficult for the English farmer to learn.

Of slow growth, agricultural co-operation in England suffers from the disadvantage of dwelling largely only on one phase—co-operative buying. In my opinion co-operative selling, though more difficult, is far more important. The countryman, working often in an isolated and almost secretive way, is suspicious of any one but himself handling his produce. This is curious, considering the trusting way in which he sends his produce

to market, not knowing even if the price obtained will cover the cost of carriage! He will have to relinquish his childish belief that *his* particular miller and *his* particular salesman are going to give him preferential rates; and I agree with Professor Long that the farmer is much more likely to co-operate when a state official goes round and tells him to do so, than when his neighbour (who might possibly get the job of being the local secretary of the society !) tries to be persuasive.

There is one strong reason why the small man still sticks to his "dealer" or miller. It is because the dealer or miller is generally willing to buy eggs and butter from the small man, who is four miles from a station and has his one horse at work in the fields. It may be that he buys his feeding stuff from the miller at top prices, and sells produce at lowest market rates, but as he manages to get rid of his produce without carriage he is satisfied. Not until agricultural co-operative societies arrange to fill up the waggons with farm produce, instead of going home empty on the return journey, will they succeed in making much progress among the smaller

farmers. They must, in fact, become salesmen as well as buyers.

So much has been written about co-operation that the subject has become an accepted commonplace—accepted in all but its practical application. But here I should like to break up new ground.

We were told in the spring of 1911 that the Board of Agriculture had applied for £20,000 from the Development Commissioners for the organisation of co-operation. But on the 26th of June of the same year, when the Report of the Commissioners was published, we learnt that the £20,000 was still under consideration,[1] and yet a sum of no less than £41,050 was recommended to be advanced by the Board for light horse-breeding! Of course we know that fox-hunting is still an important industry in England. In fact, we were informed by a noble earl that without it the British Empire would fall into a state of decay. Still, one would have imagined that a stronger case might have been made by the

[1] The Development Commissioners, I am aware, made a further grant of £50,000 a year for scientific research (26th August 1911). Let us hope those trained to teach will be fieldsmen and not schoolmen, that is, men not afraid to take off their coat and handle a plough.

Board for a supply of first-class bulls and boars for the improvement of the cattle and pigs throughout the country. The owners of horses are, taken as a whole, wealthy gentlemen; the owners of pigs and cows are, taken as a whole, poor men. There is not the same likelihood of hunters being less well bred as there is of cows and pigs, and there is a danger in increasing the number of small live-stock owners in this country who have not sufficient capital to buy the best of bulls and the best of boars for service.

Hungary, I think, was the first European state to improve its standard of live-stock by purchasing first-class sires and sending them into many country parishes for service. The improvement in Hungarian cattle has been most marked. In Ireland, as we have seen, the Department followed this excellent example by allowing farmers to have the use of valuable bulls for a nominal fee.

In England most small farmers have to pay a fee of 5s. for the use of a third-class bull or 2s. 6d. for an indifferent boar. Already we have complaints from the large graziers of the difficulties of obtaining good store cattle.

Of the grant of £41,050, no less than £26,000 is to be paid in premiums to the owners of stallions and brood mares. It shows that the rich owners are not adverse to the spoon-fed policy when the feeding is applied to their own mouths. Let them therefore loyally work to obtain a good cow and a good pig for every small holder.

In allocating further grants from the Development Fund I would stress the need of national co-operation in the creation of rural depôts for the storing of expensive agricultural machinery. Such depôts might be built at the newly-formed farm Institutes, or kept in the village in the same way as fire-engines or any other implement of public utility. I would particularly urge the buying and storing of expensive machinery. To develop the agricultural resources of our country we must encourage tillage; we must bring into active cultivation some of the twelve millions of acres of grass-land which are not "laid down" but, as the farmers would say, "fallen down" to grass. By increasing the number of small farmers in this country we are not likely to increase corn-growing, for the obvious reason that the small man without expensive machinery

cannot compete against the large farmer with his self-binder. We cannot go back to the sickle and the flail. To work with economy nowadays we must call in the self-binder with its four horses in the corn-field, and the thrashing machine in the stackyard.

It should be realised how little a farmer uses his most expensive machinery during the whole of the year. In this he is placed at a great disadvantage with the ordinary factory owner, who considers it a hardship if his engine ceases running for one day. How little are the mowing machine and the self-binder used during the year on a moderate-sized farm! Possibly for two weeks; then for fifty long weeks they will lie idle, probably rusting and deteriorating in some damp, open shed, or under a waggon-cloth.

But every one will be wanting to use these machines at the same time, remarks the cavilling wiseacre. If that be so, then it only remains to ballot as they do in Ireland with their large co-operative machines which tour from farm to farm; even as it is, the small farmer always has to wait the convenience of the owner of the machine when he hires the use of one.

As the producer, the provider of the necessaries of life, is given the opportunity, or is encouraged to co-operate on the lines I have roughly sketched, there should be some close interrelation between the co-operative producer in the country and the co-operative distributer in the towns. As the English peasant begins to produce more butter, more eggs, more bacon, more beef, more fruit and vegetables, there should be less excuse for the mechanic who sits on the committee of a co-operative stores in Manchester or Glasgow to send his orders for the necessaries of life to foreign countries. Soon, let us hope, there will be as close a tie between the agricultural co-operative societies and the town distributive stores, as there is between these stores and the Co-operative Wholesale Society.

CHAPTER XVIII.

FROM THE FARM TO THE MARKET-PLACE.

A MOVE in the right direction was made by the Postmaster-General when he extended and cheapened the cost of telephonic communication between the producer and the market salesman or retailer. As the telephone is rapidly superseding the telegraph at country post offices, I fail to see why the telephone should not be used in the same way as in towns by a payment of twopence a message instead of an annual subscription of £3, which is a heavy speculative item for a small holder to bear even in co-operation with two or three others. When this has been brought about, and small producers have sensibly agreed to bulk their goods to the station by sending one waggon-load together instead of each sending a few packages in separate carts, we have yet

to face the difficulty of obtaining reasonable traffic rates on the railways. Here the State, by practically giving the railways a monopoly, should step in either to control rates, or to take over the entire management of the railways.

England is the only European country of any commercial importance that leaves the great steel public highways under the control of individuals whose business it is to serve the public at as high a price as they can possibly exact.

It is not only the agricultural producer who feels the pressure of high railway rates, but the merchant princes as well. Not only has the farmer to pay (according to Sir Bernhard Samuelson) 59s. 3d. to send cattle from Hull to Manchester, while for the same distance the charge in Germany would be only 38s. 6d., in Holland 37s. 6d., or in Belgium 29s. 6d. ; but the dealer in agricultural wares would, in England, have to pay 25s. to send a quantity of machinery from Leeds to Hull that in Germany would only cost him 4s. 6d., in Belgium 8s., and in Holland 5s. 6d. for the same distance.

Ireland seems to fare worse than England and Scotland, not only in tariffs on goods,

but also in passenger fares. Minerals, for instance, cost 6s. 7d. per ton in Ireland and 2s. 7d. a ton in England; and passenger fares in Ireland, according to the *Financial News*, "cost 13s. 9d. per 165 miles, whilst for the same distance you could travel on the State railways in Belgium for 8s. 2d., or in Germany for 10s. 8d., or in Denmark for 4s. 4d." A dealer, Mr. J. E. Biggar, before the Revision of Rates Committee, 1890, stated that the annual purchase of pigs amounted to between 30,000 and 60,000 pigs, and declared that his firm had to close Clones and several other markets on account of the high rates. Another dealer said that he could get pigs brought from Copenhagen to Ardrossan for a third of the sum and nearly as quickly as he could from Ballina to Ardrossan.

Instances might be multiplied to a wearisome degree. Apologists for the railways contend that farmers do not co-operate and bulk their goods. That is so. But it is equally true that when large dealers and merchants send large consignments the tariffs are higher than on Continental State lines.

The fear of the cost of administration holds

back many people from resorting to the entire State control of our railways, but when we begin to compare the cost of managing State lines on the Continent with companies' lines, we shall see that the State lines are more economically managed.

Mr. J. S. Jeans has drawn up the following comparative statement :—

Countries.	State Lines.	Companies' Lines.
	Per cent.	Per cent.
Germany . . .	9·40	13·10
Austria-Hungary .	6·50	8·47
Belgium . . .	5·05	10·13
Denmark . . .	6·89	5·77
France . . .	16·16	9·58
Italy . . .	6·49	8·76
Norway . . .	7·30	7·00
Holland . . .	5·30	10·35
Roumania . .	4·40	10·80
Russia . . .	9·27	13·70

It will be noticed that in France alone is the cost of State administration considerably greater than private administration. This difference, Mr. Jeans tells us, is explained by the fact "that the State only owns the feeders, and companies the main trunks. France therefore is exceptional. But in the case of countries

where the conditions of the comparisons are more parallel, the State lines will be seen to be invariably the more economically managed as regards administration."

The recent railway strike, crippling the whole trade of the nation at a moment's notice, has shown to us all in a vital way that the railway lines have become the real metal highroads in which certain companies of individuals have been granted monopoly rights. Surely it is an anachronism that any nation dependent upon the use of these metals for its daily existence should suffer its food-supply to be carried or withheld at the dictation of individuals. No other country permits the individual to exercise such despotic rights.

There are many parts of the British Isles, out of the beaten track of trade, where there is no railway service, or places inefficiently and expensively served by railways, where a well-organised road motor service would be of an enormous benefit to producers as well as consumers. Such a service might be of incalculable use in bringing food from the farm to the town in the event of a suspension of the railway traffic.

A great deal of time is often lost in sending

perishable goods along branch lines where handling takes place two or three times before the goods reach the market-place. Think how this affects commodities like milk and strawberries, especially when one bears in mind the cartage *to* the station at one end and *from* the station at the other.

A good motor lorry could easily collect as well as deliver goods to a market-place, or to shops in a town thirty miles away, and should the town be glutted with some particular produce, the lorry could continue its career to another town.

A well-organised telephonic system should prevent produce being sent to glutted markets. But the question arises: Who should own and control the motor lorries, and where should they be housed? In the purely rural districts, I would suggest that the county council should have the control of the motors, or possibly the rural district council, and they might be housed where the local fire-engine is housed, or in the depôts where I have suggested that agricultural implements should be stored. It would, however, be easier, perhaps, as far as obtaining fresh statutory powers are concerned, to let the municipal authorities who

own the market-place exercise control over the motors.

It should be thoroughly realised that there are already quite enough demands made upon that "unskilled labourer," the tiller of the soil. Besides being a gardener, stock-keeper, carpenter, woodman, thatcher, hedger, plumber, etc., it is expected of him that he shall as well be a good business man. This expectation is, of course, preposterous. The mechanic drawing good wages in the town never has to sell anything but his labour, and yet he is ranked higher than the cultivator of the soil, who has not only to be a skilled workman, but also to be a crafty man of business if he is not to go under in the struggle for existence.

There is, we know, a kind of small stock-keeper who is also a dealer. He is a good business man in a pettifogging way. But, nationally speaking, no economic progress is made by farmers changing cattle in the sterile game of skinning one another in the process. It is the man who is producing store stock, milk, and crops with whom we are concerned, and it is a melancholy reflection that the best cultivators of holdings are often the worst business men. It is a pity that they should

ever be compelled to become salesmen. Individual and national efficiency is only achieved by encouraging these men to stick to the job that they can do well. They should be relieved of all the anxiety of marketing goods and the waste of time in attending markets. Other men can do this much better, and these should not be self-interested men but men working in harmony with the producer. Think with what greater heart the small farmer would work if he were sure that every drop of milk he produced would be taken from his gate by the collector of a co-operative dairy, together with his eggs to an egg depôt, and his bacon to a bacon factory. And with what greater zest the grower of vegetables and fruit would work were he sure that his produce would be carried away and sold by a salesman who was his own servant.

Yet collective organisation in production, collection, and delivery of farm produce is of little avail unless the producer has some control over the selling of his produce. It is at the end of the furrow—whether the cultivator works alone or in the company of others — where he meets with success or failure. It is at the end where most of the

robbers stand to plunder the hard-won earnings of those who till the earth.

In a Free Trade country where we boast of having few tariffs, and laugh at the *octroi* exacted on farm produce as it enters a French town, we have by Act of Parliament created a monopoly in market-places which in turn sets up an internal tariff as grievous as any *octroi* endured by the French peasant.

"Notwithstanding," says Mr. A. C. Wilkins, the well-known fruit-grower and jam-maker, "the enormous growth of trade induced by the railways, there appears to be no greater number of markets in London than there were two or three centuries ago. The *Encyclopædia Britannica* gives the names of the eleven markets existing in the time of Stowe the chronicler, which correspond nearly with the eleven at present existing, and continues: 'Since the removal of Hungerford Market to make way for Charing Cross station, Covent Garden has remained the only vegetable and flower market of importance in the Metropolis, although vegetables of a cheap kind are sold in the Boro' and at Spitalfields, also at Farringdon Road and the Great Northern Railway. . . . In 1328, a Charter was granted to the Corporation

of London by Edward III., conveying to it the sole right to establish markets within seven miles' circuit of the City. The system, though now broken up—even with regard to provisions, so far as the retail trade is concerned —remains intact in regard to the vending of certain provisions wholesale.'" What statesman, Mr. Wilkins asks, shall win immortality by breaking up the rest?

"They (the producers) send up their best produce under the illusion that they are dealing with the merchant princes of the best market in the world, whereas, in reality, they are only supplying the lowly costermonger with job lots at half-price. Covent Garden market especially monopolises the most valuable market site in London because of its proximity to the West End, but it is meanly managed, cribbed, cabined, and confined. Outside the market, in the dirty narrow street, waggon-loads of choice produce wait for hours and lose their market. Hundreds of empty carts bar the drivers' way to the salesmen's stands, and the drivers fiercely contest every inch of room. The writer himself has gone through this experience from 4.30 to 7.30 A.M. After urgent remonstrances he has had to wait

on the top of the waggon and then see his precious peas divided among the costermongers at half-price."

"It is no exaggeration to say that the condition of the markets is deplorable from the market gardener's and the small holder's point of view. The markets appear to be conducted in the interests of privileged individuals who constitute a monopoly disastrous to the welfare of the workers of the land.

"From the point of view of the State, the markets of London and the country, if well organised, with adequate root and branch reforms, could have immense possibilities of wealth and be well calculated to settle spontaneously upon the land the large rural population in comfort and prosperity. . . . He (the producer) has laboured at his task twelve months, and then gets only half the value of his labour, whilst the middlemen between them with a few hours' work receive half his profit."

Indeed, under the ægis of the State an enormous monopoly has been built up on a site which once belonged to the monks of Westminster, and from which now the Duke of Bedford derives a princely tribute.

I myself have experienced the disadvantages of sending produce to Covent Garden, and on my pointing out to a large salesman that my gooseberries realised a sum much lower than other gooseberries of inferior quality, I was coolly informed that as a small grower I could hardly expect to have my fruit sold until after the large grower's fruit had been cleared! There is another evil too against which the small grower has to contend, and that is the vested interest of the salesman. He is himself often a buyer of large fields of standing crops of vegetables and fruit, and it is natural enough that his own wares should take precedence in the market. Then again, who is to know that Mr. Isaacs, "market salesman," is the proprietor of Messrs. Union Jack & Co., "greengrocers," of the market approach—the firm which bought your stuff from Mr. Isaacs?

In Holland, most of the market gardeners and the stock-keepers, tired of the low prices meted out to them by the dealers, have formed their own co-operative markets with their salaried salesmen. Why can we not do the same in England? And in doing so, why can we not go one better and have municipal markets with salaried auctioneers, for stock

as well as for fruit and vegetables, open not only to members of co-operative societies but to every farmer or grower, large or small ?

There are many people who are not aware of the tremendous sway exercised by auctioneers over private markets which are sometimes their own. I know, for instance, in the south of England, a certain large market-place over which one auctioneer holds an undisputed sway, and this auctioneer, like many others, is himself a large breeder of pigs and cattle. No one knows to whose bid the hammer sometimes falls, and even if private auctioneers are not directly interested in the selling of cattle at low prices, they are sometimes indirectly interested. A friend of mine once heard an auctioneer coolly turn round to his clerk in the middle of selling a beast and say, "We must let So-and-so have this or he will be grumbling again." Rings of dealers we can hardly help—they may be formed anywhere—but we can at least see that our cattle are not sold in privately-owned markets and that the auctioneer goes there with clean hands.

What the producer asks for is a fair field and no favour. Markets, indeed, should be

freed from private ownership, and salesmen or auctioneers should be the salaried officials of the municipality. In no other way, that I can see, can we save producers from the octopus grip of the present market monopolists.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE OUTLOOK.

"COUNTRY life is very good, in fact, the best—for cattle," wrote Sydney Smith; and Scotland was evidently the country he had in his mind. Whilst from Ireland the stream of emigrants to the States has been partially checked by the aid of legislative measures, in Scotland it has been proceeding at a disastrously rapid rate owing apparently to the lack of land legislation and the blind adherence to *laissez-faire* economics. This, however, does not seem to be in main the fault of the Scotch so much as it does the fault of those who take up comfortable quarters on the banks of the Thames during certain seasons of the year.

Deer and sheep have rapidly encroached upon land once farmed by the crofter class, and the tragic story of rural Scotland might

be found in the attempt to convert the land into a pleasure resort for multi-millionaires, who are more often than not of anything but British extraction. "Of course all this is," as John Ruskin remarked, "quite natural to a sporting people who have learned the smell of gunpowder, sulphur, and gas tar better than they have that of violets and thyme." Scotland indeed has need of a modern Isaiah who will cry out with vigour, "Woe unto them who lay field to field till there be no place, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth."

But let us realise at once that whether it be sheep or whether it be deer that displace them, men, women, and children are fast disappearing from the glens of the Highlands; and while this continues we must be prepared to face racial bankruptcy north of the Tweed.

There is no room in this little book to deal with the Scottish problem which on the publication of the last Census stirred within us all a profound misgiving as to the land policy, or the lack of a land policy, which we have been pursuing fugitively for the last hundred years. Those who claim that the land given over to deer and grouse is fit for nothing

else should consider whether a good deal of it is not fit for reafforestation. Surely in some of the lowland counties sheep have seriously encroached upon good arable land to the detriment of the nation; and with the labourer goes the blacksmith, the cobbler, and the tailor. The shepherd alone remains. Plinius, it should be remembered, found in the establishment of large landed properties the cause of Italy's ruin.

In England a great deal has yet to be done in settling people on the land. At the end of 1910 we learnt that there were still 127,256 acres applied for and not yet found for applicants, 30 per cent of whom are agricultural labourers. We learn too that only 1·8 desire to purchase land, which proves that with security of tenure freedom can be purchased more economically as tenant than as owner. There is too the wisdom of the ages to guide us, for was it not the first husbandman who framed in imperishable language the words: "The land shall not be sold for ever, for the land is mine"?

In certain journals I notice a subtle tendency to give very rosy accounts as to the possible profits to be made out of small

holdings, journals that are strongly in favour of small holders purchasing their land. A timely warning might here be given to those inclined to be lured into buying slices of land on derelict farms in the hope of winning large profits.

In spite of the richness of our land, England in its yield per acre stands nearly the lowest of continental countries. We can boast of only £4 per acre to our credit, whereas Belgium, with a much poorer soil, produces £20 to the acre. It is probable that the size of our English farms compared to those of Belgium, Denmark, Prussia, and France has something to do with this low yield. The average size of a holding in England is 70 acres, whilst in Denmark it is 49 acres, in Prussia $33\frac{1}{4}$, in France 24, and in Belgium $14\frac{1}{2}$.

Mr. Christopher Turnor, in his interesting book *Land Problems*, states that no farmer can farm individually more than 1000 acres with efficiency, and that from the national standpoint the man with 25 acres is the citizen to be prized. The latest returns show, fortunately, I think, for the nation, that the farms are becoming smaller in size. However, I would by no means say that there is no

room for the large farmer, so long as he farms efficiently; but were I autocrat of this Realm I would penalise the large farmer who farmed so badly that the whole nation as a body politic had to suffer for it. The landowner has power to get rid of a bad tenant—why, then, should not the State take over land which is going derelict? It is nothing novel for the Crown to sequester large estates for a mere political whim; why, then, should not the State intervene to save, as it were, its heart's blood from being drained?

Such farms when acquired by the State at their market price could be worked for national purposes—for breeding horses, for raising beef and mutton, or growing corn for our army and navy.

The question of rural education I have dealt with in the chapter devoted to handicraft, and I do not think that I need to stress the points at issue, for it seems to me that our Government are more alive to the development of rural education than to other forms of agricultural development. In July 1911 we learn than no less than £325,000 is to be advanced from the Development Fund up to March 31, 1916, to aid and form Farm

Institutes, and one of the proposed schools is similar to the winter schools such as I have already suggested in these pages—that is, a sixteen to twenty weeks' winter agricultural course for the sons of small farmers who have acquired some practical experience on the land since leaving elementary schools.

It is, however, the business organiser and marketing facilities that are more wanted than the teacher, and that is why I have laid greater stress on this, the business side of agriculture. Improved methods of culture will follow rapidly as the tiller of the soil obtains greater marketing facilities, and with them access to capital. I have shown how in Ireland agricultural organisation preceded agricultural education and how success in co-operative organisation acted as a stimulus to improved methods of tillage.

Agriculture is still our greatest industry, producing annually £200,000,000. It is the industry on which every other rests. It is the most ancient and honourable of crafts. Without it none of the arts could flourish. Without it human life would cease. In the stifling atmosphere of our congested cities we have learnt that man cannot reproduce his

kind after the third generation. As our cinder-heaps increase, let us see to it that the grass of our green pastures does not wither.

The grave labour problems, with the recurring disturbances assuming greater dimensions as both capital and labour become more highly mobilised, will gather into huge proportions if the people of England remain a landless proletariat. So long as the workers are divorced from the land, so long will the unrest grow. The people are working at breaking-point.

Not only is the subjective poverty greater amongst the half-educated poor to-day than it ever has been, but the objective poverty has been steadily growing since 1895. We learn from the Board of Trade that though wages have increased 12·4, prices have increased 19·4. This means that the purchasing power of the wage-earning class has decreased. At the same time the incomes of the wealthy class steadily rise.

In spite of Insurance Bills little is done to ensure work for the unemployed. No new industries are created. In an age of competitive strife, to put one man to work means displacing another — everywhere, but on our wasted

acres, where the greater productivity means a greater demand for factory-made goods. Under our very feet lies an undeveloped source of wealth. When we have removed from our eyes the slime and grit of our cinder-strewn cities, then perhaps we shall awake to the necessity of re-colonising our own land. We must begin by retracing our steps to England's green pastures.

"*Allons*, comrade, the road is before us!"

THE END.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES
THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY
This book is DUE on the last date stamped below

Form L-9
25m-2,'13(3205)

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
AT
LOS ANGELES
LIBRARY

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY
AA 000 278 142 5

HD
1925
G82a